

The Morning Seeker :

Shewing the Benefit of being

Good betimes.

With DIRECTIONS to make
SURE WORK

About

EARLY RELIGION.

Laid open in Several

SERMONS

By *John Ryther* Minister of the Gospel.

*Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while
he is near, Isa. 55. 6.*

O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee. Ps. 63. 1.

L O N D O N,

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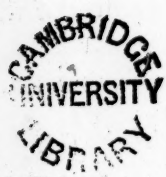
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T O T H E
Honourable and truly Religious
T H E
Lady Dorothy Norcliffe
O F
Langton in York-shire;

The Lady *Elizabeth Bright*,
The Lady *Katharine Wentworth*,
and the rest of her Vertuous Daughters.

M A D A M,

I Have long waited for an opportunity to acknowledge the many and great Obligations I have been under by your Ladiship, and your Family, since Providence put such a Price into my hand as

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the mercy of your Acquaintance ; and this is one reason among many others why I Dedicate these poor papers to you & yours. When I considered how

2 Joh. 1.
5.

*One observes
that St.*

*John who
was the be-
loved Disci-
ple was of
a Noble
stock, in
which re-
gard he was
so known*

*of the
High Priest
that he did
not fear the
Jews, so as
the other
Disciples
did. Where
Nobility is
enamelled
with grace,
it renders
it far more
illustrious
and splen-
did.*

John wrote to the Elect Lady, and her Children walking in the Truth, I was much encouraged thereunto. Besides upon these accounts I could not but lay hold of the present opportunities. 1. The Care that I know you have many years conscientiously spent in the Education of those tender Branches, the Lord hath honoured you with. O what glory might have been raised up to God, if in the Families of Honour and Quality there had been such diligence in training up their Posterities, in the fear of that God, whom it is a great

Honour

Dedicatory.

Honour to serve ! 2. The great success that crowned your Ladyships endeavours herein, (that the Lord let you see your dear Children set upon seeking the Lord betimes,) that so many morning seekers in such a Family (as I must confess I have not elsewhere known) while the dew of Gods blessing upon your Education lay upon these Branches; how did they while young grow up in Holy Affections and Desires after the Wayes and Truths of God ! 3. And all this much in a time when the Power of Godliness in many great Families was much discouraged (if not decry'd) though Gospel duties, reading the Word, praying in Families, a strict observation of Sabbaths did grow into reproach

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Josh. 24.
15.

and contempt in many Houses : yet all that time the Lord helped you to Resolve with an Honourable, and holy person of Old, *I and my house will serve the Lord.*

4. The great encouragement that you have given, not only to me the meanest of those Servants of God acquainted with your Family, but that you have given to many more in a dark and gloomy day. O how many Families have you and yours refreshed in a day of straits ! and is it any dishonour to testifie this before this uncharitable world ? 5. The Lord honouring you with solidity of judgment, these giddy reeling times ; that in dayes and times when erroneous notions and principles, as well as corrupt practices have overspread many Families,

Dedictory.

Families, you have been preserved in the truth, and have taken great care that your Children should, while they were young, be trained up in the truth, as it is in Jesus. If I had no more reasons for my present tender of these poor endeavours to you and yours, are not these enough? But I am afraid you will say here is more than enough said: though not so much as might. I did not know upon serious thoughts how such a design as this might tend to encourage or promote good beginnings and breathings after God in your Family. And though, through the rich mercy and grace of God, you be not a tender young plant in the Courts of God, but grown up in the Grace and Knowledge of our

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Lord *Jesus Christ* ; yet here may be some thing presented to your children that may prove through a blessing from above of use to them, as to their further progress in the good wayes of God. I remembred one thing, when I thought of this Dedication, how often * some of them did employ me to buy or acquaint them with what Books they should buy proper and useful for them; and who are fitter to Dedicate an useful Book to, than such? (if God will so please to make this poor Treatise.) There are Lambs (your Ladiships know) in the flock of *Christ*, that need carrying, as well as those that are with young, that need leading; there are Babes in *Christs* School who have need of milk, as well as stronger

* when I
had the hap-
piness of
being con-
versant
with them.

Dedicatory.

stronger Christians that need
stronger meat. If this may be
milk, sincere milk that any of
Gods new born Babes may grow
thereby, yea, any of your Chil-
dren may grow up in grace there-
by, this will be the rejoycing of
the Author. Now *Madam*, that
God would cause your House to
grow, who hath made a sure Co-
venant with you and yours, and
that the dew of Heaven, as well
as fatness of the Earth may be
the portion of you and yours, is
the prayer of

Decem. 9.
1672.

Your Ladiships

in all Humble and due

Observance,

John Ryther.



To all Young Ones whose hearts are set to seek the Lord before it be too late, who are and desire still to be Morning Seekers.

W*Hen I considered the dangers that such a day, as we live in, exposes your precious Souls to, I was willing for your Souls sakes to contribute my Mite to that Work which so many Reverend and Worthy Servants of Christ had gone before me in : Yet we living in a sleepy Age, and knowing we have sleepy hearts, we must be often calling on ; and the more Calls, and the more Cryers, the more are Souls stirred and startled. I have sadly observed several things since I with others of the*
Lords

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Lords Servants have been under this present day and dispensation.

Job 6. 19,
20,

1. *That our great hopes and expectations, that we have had of the Lords effectual working upon the hearts of Young Ones, have often met with great disappointments; and many of the poor Ministers of Christ have been like the Troops of Tema, and the Company of Sheba, waiting for some good issue of the travel of their Souls, but they were confounded, because they had hoped they were ashamed; and is not this cruelty, to crush our hopes and cross our expectations, who travel for you, and all in hope Christ might be formed in you? Will it be your gain if we lose our prayers, our tears, our studies, our pains? Will this be profitable to you, if all our designs for your good be made by your selves miscar-
rying designs?*

2. *That it is a great reproach to the wayes of God, and name of God, when such, as have been for a time forward for God, do go back again. How hath the Name of God been blasphemed many
times*

to the Reader.

times by the miscarriages of such? And how may it be said of many Young Ones, as was said of that Fig-tree Jesus Christ cursed, How soon is this Fig-tree withered away! Where is your Zeal, your Affections, your Love, your fervency for God, for his Ordinances, for Duties, for Worship, that once seemed to move upon your Spirits? O consider of it young men, that the wayes of God have been evil spoken of by your means. And I may say to you as the Prophet to them, This hath been by your means. Mat. 21.
20.
Mal. 1. 9.

3. The going back of such I have observed is a great stumbling-block to others, a great discouragement to others to own the wayes of God. O say such poor Souls, shall not I prove as others have done? make a fair flourish for a year or two, bear green leaves, and promising buds and blossoms, but yet for all that brings forth no fruit to perfection? And therefore such poor Souls rather sit still, seeing so many that have been in a fair way of profession, backslide and apostatize before them.

4. Many

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Deut. 29.
19.

4. Many poor Sinners have been hardened in their Atheism, Profaneness and contempt of the wayes of God by seeing you fall off after that you have made some progress in the wayes of God. Do not they conclude at the sight of such miscarriages, that their conditions are good, though they walk in the imaginations of their own heart? Do not they cry Peace, Peace to their own Souls, though they walk in Soul-undoing and destroying courses? Take two young men, One of them falls under some conviction of sin, under the Ministry of the Word, upon this Conviction he launches out into a visible Profession, owns the wayes of God, Hears, Prays, Reads, repeats Sermons, &c. The other of them continues sinning on still, senseless of his Soul, kicks against the pricks still, but he cries, his Companion will return to him again, this is but for a fit, a little melancholy, or to please some party or other. Well, in a little time it proves thus, the Professing young man becomes profane again, returns with the dog to his vomit, and
with

2 Pet. 2.
22.

to the Reader.

with the Sow after once washing to her wallowing in the mire, returns to his Onions and Garlick again: O how this doth now harden the other poor Sinner in his dangerous and damnable state, and makes him venture his Soul to live and lye, and dye in it!

5. I have observed such Young Men that once have tasted some thing of the Word of God, and have laid under Convictions of Sin, when they have fallen off and lost them, they have grown harder after than before; they have like the wicked men we read of, grown worse and worse: Such have out-^{1 Tim. 3.}
stripped others in sin. As Iron often heated proves harder, so it is with such poor Souls; and is not this a sad sight to see him a Drunkard, a Swearer, a Reviler, a Scoffer at the wayes of God, who once was a praying Young Man? One that worshipt with those he now scoffs at and reviles? If one had told thee while thou wert a praying, a professing Young Man, that thy Praying, thy Hearing, thy repeating Sermons, would have ended thus, would not thou

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2 Kings 8. 13. thou have said as Hazael did to the Prophet, Is thy Servant a Dog? O but have not a few years produced too many such instances?

6. I have observed, that as soon as many Young Ones have set forth under Convictions of a need of Christ to seek after him, they many times have fallen into erroneous notions. When Satan cannot keep poor Souls in profane practices, he then will labour to poyson them with pernicious Principles. And as the Devil hath his Nurseries to debauch Young Ones in their Practices, so he hath his Nurseries to poyson them with pernicious Principles. No sooner doth a Young Man become sober and serious, but there are persons that are ready to drop their poyson upon them; and so many poor Souls are set wrong at the very first setting out.

Hos. 13. 13. 7. I have observed Young Ones to be like foolish Children, as the Prophet sayes, to stay long in the place of breaking forth; Especially Young Ones under Godly Education, nursed
up

to the Reader.

up in Godly Families : How long is it often before the work be a through-work upon their Spirits ? Alas, how do their Convictions come and go, for months, if not for years some times, not hearing of them ; and then another while Conscience being a Boanarges to them, thundring forth the terrours of the Lord to them. One while they are murdered, another while they walk and make a dreadful noise in the Conscience. Here poor Soul, thou may see thy danger in delaying thy great work of seeking in thy prime and flower of thy youth.

8. *I have observed a great deal of pride grow up with the Profession of Young Ones. O how often hath this been the mortal bane and poyson of many of their Souls ! How many have upon this Rock split their Convictions, their Profession, their Expectations with their Souls for ever ? Have not many poor Young Seekers been over-set by carrying too much sail ? Upon their supposition of acquired gifts and parts how have they prided themselves ? untill as the Poets say of young Narcissus,*
a that

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that he fell in love with his own shadow untill he pined away. Have not many Young Seekers fallen into a Consumption by self-love, and setting too high a price upon themselves? Nay, hath not this sin caused the Lord to suffer some of them to fall into some visible gross evil, that might keep them little and low in their own eyes all their dayes? Many have got a halt at the first setting out, that they might be kept from self-exaltation.

9. I have observed an untractable Spirit grow up with Young Ones, to their Superiours and Guides, which is a dangerous evil. Doth this become young Travellers, nay indeed any Travellers to cast off their Guides? or to think they can get to their journeys end, without observing the Counsels, Conduct, and the directions of such as are set over them in the Lord? Are Ministers set over you to be your Guides, are Parents, are Masters set over you to be
1 Pet. 5.5. your Guides, and will you prove untractable to these? This is a great provocation to the Lord, which occasioned
that

to the Reader.

that *Exhortation of Peter's*, You younger submit your selves to the elder. As it particularly relates to *Ministers*, so it may refer to others. At what door came in *Erroneous Principles*, at first, and *Licentious Practices*? Was it not at this, when persons refused to obey and submit to them that were set over them in the Lord? Heb. 13.
17.

10. I have observed that Satans grand Designs and Engines are laid so as (if it be possible) to prevent Jesus Christ having a Young Off-spring. The Devil would not have Christ have any Nurseries, any Young Nurseries; where any tender Plants should be set and watered, that they might become Trees of Righteousness. Therefore he hath his Nurseries to debauch and corrupt them; like Herod, he is all for killing Christ in the cradle. O this puts him upon that rage and wrath in pursuing poor Souls, as soon as their Convictions begin to stir in them. As Pharaoh pursued Israel, when he saw them attempting an escape; so doth Satan follow poor Young Ones as soon as ever they look

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out of their miserable Captivity under which they are in their natural estates and conditions.

11. *I have observed that the Lords effectual working upon the hearts of Young Ones, is, and hath been a token of some approaching appearance of God on the behalf of a People or a Nation. It argues God hath still some work there, some thing to do there, that he would not leave that place and people. He doth not beget Children for the murderer, he doth not use to beget Children and send away the breasts from them. And on the contrary when Conversion-work ceases, O then some heavy blow comes! Some National stroak is at the door! When the Harvest is inn'd, then the labourers are called home, and this portends a storm. Ambassadors calling home looks like a War.*

12. *I have observed the sad and doleful heart-breaking lamentations of many Godly Parents over the Souls of their dear and dead Children, many Families mourning over their dead.*
There

to the Reader.

There was a great cry throughout the Exod. 11.
Land of Egypt when the First-born ^{6.}
was dead. O what a cry hath gone
through the Land for the Souls of poor
dead Children! One Family crying,
Lord, this dear Child is dead, his
Soul is dead while he lives; (as is 1 Tim. 5. 5.
said of some, while they live in plea-
sures are dead) and that which cuts
poor Parents to the heart, is this, they
fear they shall ere long hear such a
cry for their Childrens Souls, as was
in the night time in the great Plague
some times, Cast out your dead,
cast out your dead. O then sayes
one Family, LORD, how many
have we to cast out? So many Chil-
dren, and so few of them made a-
live to God, so few that have Christ
formed in their precious Souls? O
you Young Ones that are the Seed of
Godly Parents, if you miscarry to all
Eternity, your Parents Tears and
Prayers, I must tell you, will be as so
much oyl to make Hell flames burn
so much the more vehemently upon
you. If you that are Children of the
Kingdome

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Kingdome by Education, be shut out, this will aggravate your condemnation dreadfully.

13. *I have observed that the wandering of such Young Ones, in the by-ways of Sin, as have sprung from, and have been nursed up in Godly Families, have rolled much reproach upon Gods Covenant. If the reproach was only upon their Persons, it would not be so laid to heart; though for a Son to be an occasion of reproach to his Father and Family is sad: but that which goes deeper is, the Covenant of Gods reproached. The world say, they see no difference betwixt the posterity of the Godly and the Ungodly, and this is an over-whelming consideration to them. And O Young Ones, is neither the Name of God, nor the Name of your tender Parents, nor your Families, nor your immortal Souls precious in your eyes? How may that Endicement be drawn up against you? The Son dishonoureth the Father, and the Daughter riseth up against her Mother.*

Mic. 7. 6.

Lastly,

to the Reader.

Lastly, I have sadly observed, a spirit of stubbornness and rebellion hath taken possession of many Young Ones towards their dear and tender Parents; which indeed is a sin of the highest rank, therefore reckoned among the sins of the later times: and so on the contrary obedience to Parents is reckoned among the most Religious Duties. You shall fear every man his Mother, and his Father, and keep my Sabbaths, I am the Lord your God. Yea, in the punishment of this sin we may read the heinousness of it, the Rebellious Son was to be stoned to death under the Law; and sure the sin is not less now in Gospel-times than it was then.

2 Tim. 3. 2.
Rom. 1. 30.
Lev. 19. 3.
Deut. 21, 18, 19, 20, 21.

Now Young Men, these were some of those Observations I have made, that tendered my heart towards the everlasting good of your immortal Souls, and prevailed with me to put these papers into your hands, hoping the Lord may in some measure succeed them

The Epistle, &c.

*them with his blessing, which is and
shall be the hearty Prayer of*

Your unfeigned Souls

Friend and Servant in the

Ministry of the Gospel,

Decem. 9.
1672.

J. R.

Advertisement to the Reader.

There is published by the same Author a Book Entituled *A Plat for Mariners, or the Sea-mans Preacher*, in several Sermons upon *Jonah's Voyage*. In 8^{vo}.

Isa.



Prov. 8. 17.

*I love them that love me, and
they that seek me early shall
find me.*



That young Inquirers after the Lord Jesus Christ may be encouraged in their following on to know him, notwithstanding the temptations they meet with without them, and within them, this Text of Scripture is very considerable.

The Words are the Promise of Christ, to young Seekers, by way of encouragement, to continue, and hold on in seeking him.

I. We have the Persons to whom

B

the

the Promise is made, *They that seek me early, they that seek me in the morning* (so the word) because that which is done in the morning, is always done most vigorously, the Spirits being more raised, and lively. Therefore we read of the morning, as an especial praying time, as a time of worship, *I direct my prayer unto thee in the morning, and will look up* — and at another time (says he) *my soul waits for thee, more than they which wait for the morning*, Psal. 130. 6. (viz.) than the Watchmen that give notice of the morning, that they may offer up their Sacrifice (says Mr. Ainsworth.) These are the Persons under the Promise, that seek him in the morning of their time, in their youth.

Prov. 15.
14. The
word is u-
sed.

Psal. 130.
6.

Tempus
matutini-
um He-
braeis dici-
tur Boker
à Bokkar:
Est quere-
re magis
conatu, &
studio

(Pro. 15.
14.) It sig-
nifies to
seek by su-
ing and
praying, by
asking di-
rection and
counsel of
them that
are able to
give it.

2. We have the Person that makes this Promise, *They that seek me* (viz.) *Jesus Christ*. It is apparent all over the Chapter, that is meant of Christ, who is here called Wisdom, who indeed is the Wisdom of the Father. I need not take up time in proving this, the very Text carries its own Evidence in it. O Poor Soul! Christ himself is
your

your Encourager , what ever Discouragements you meet withall , and this he doth by his own Promise.

3. Here is the Promise it self, *they shall find me.* They are poor mourning Seekers, early Seekers, and young Seekers , but they shall be sure , and certain finders. They shall not seek, as God threatned them , in the Prophet , *they shall seek me , with their Herds, and their Flocks, and shall not find me.* They shall not seek, and be disappointed, they shall not seek and go without , but they shall find me ; who ever mis of Christ , of all the Persons in the World , they shall not mis of him. O what Encouragement is here to young Seekers of Christ ! [This word in the Text we have rendered thus ; (Job 8. 5.) *If thou would seek God betimes, if thou wouldest morning God : Shahar (diluculare Deum diligenter , sedulo & magno studio querere.)* Hosea 1. 6.

The Observations are these.

1. *That young Inquirers after Christ*
B a are

are much upon his heart.

2. That Morning Seekers shall be sure, and certain Finders.

3. That usually in Souls morning lookers after Christ, they meet with much discouragement. This is strongly implied, because Christ gives them this Promise, by way of Encouragement. We will begin with this last.

Let us enquire a little what these Discouragements are; what are great Hindrances of poor morning Seekers.

1. From within, there are discouragements. 2. From without.

1. Discouragements from within.

1. Strong Corruptions; for as soon as ever the Soul begins to look out, and enquire after Jesus Christ, then doth Corruption begin to work more strongly, than it did before. Now corruption is more strong in young ones than in others, and upon this occasion (says the Soul) Will ever my poor soul get over this mountain to Jesus Christ? Alas! there is this strange Lust betwixt me and Christ, and shall I not one day perish by

by the hand of *Saul*? Will not these Sons of *Zerviah* be too strong for me? O now says the poor Soul my Enemies are strong and lively, (as *David* said) and thrust sore at me. O poor Soul! what though thy Corruptions be strong, yet thy Redeemer is strong: he is stronger than the strong man armed, and that promise answers this discouragement.

He shall bring forth Judgment unto Victory: though thou be but a poor smock-ing flax, and bruised reed, yet thou shalt have the day over all thy Corruptions; and will not such a day of Victory call for a day of thanksgiving? I have read of a Victory called *Victoria Hallelujetica*, upon this: The Saxons here in England being to engage the Britains, the Leader of the Britains being a * Godly Bishop, having his Army in some Dales and Valleys, ordered them to crie *Hallelujah*, which they did, and through the Eccho of the voyce in the Valleys, the Enemy thought there was many more of them, than there was, and through fear fled. O poor discouraged

Isaiah 42.

3.

* German who came over from France to subdue the Pelagian Heresie.

ged soul ! thou shalt have such a Victory over thy Corruptions , as thou wilt for ever sing *Hallelujah* in Heaven for.

2. Discouragement from within is weakness of Grace. O ! says the poor soul , can such a weak Creature as I ever be able to seek Christ , through so many difficulties ? every sin is too hard for me , every duty too hard for me , I may as well give over praying , and hearing , and contending against my sin , for I find my self so weak , I am ever and anon foyled. O poor soul ! dost not thou know the Promise is made to truth of Grace , and not only to the strength of grace : bruised Reeds are within the Promise , as well as strong Cedars ; the Lambs are under the Promise of his Bosome ; the weak of the flock this good Shepherd hath promised to strengthen ; the days of small things he will not despise ; weak ones are neither cast out , nor cast off , because of weakness , if they be Children.

3. Discouragement is sense of their own vileness and unworthiness. O
poor

poor young ones ! at first setting out after Christ they are under their Humiliations for Sin , a great piece of which Humiliation lies in the sense of their own Unworthiness ; thus it was with the poor Prodigal , at his first coming home to his Father's House ; *Lord , I am not worthy to be called thy Son* ; and as the *Samaritan* , *I am not worthy thou should come under my Roof* : O says such a poor soul , Lord wilt thou be found of such a wretch as I ; such a vile wretch as I ?

O poor soul ! dost thou not know that all sinners that come unto him , though vile , though wretched , though miserable , are to be welcomed by him ? And this as he is commissioned by the Father ; *He will in no wise cast out them that come unto him* ; and the strength and stress of all lies here , this is the will of my Father . Now Christ will be sure to act obedientially , and faithfully to his Commission received of his Father . Poor Souls ! were not the poor *Gentiles* , who were Christ's Guests , vile , Hedge-way sinners ? High-way sinners ? the

blind, and maimed? yet how doth Christ welcome such Guests to his Table? Are you viler than these? Alas poor souls! you that are under the sense of your own vileness, you come right to Christ unworthy of a Pardon, of a good look, of a good word; as they came with Ropes about their necks to the King of *Israel*; he usually accepts and pardons such.

4. Discouragement from within is sense of former lost, and buried Convictions. While we are under Ordinances, or we are under Afflictions, O how ordinary is this! and we are affected with these Convictions. But one Temptation or other, either within, or without, meets thee, and the Conviction presently is buried; the Soul hears no more of it, it may be for a year, or two; but if the Lord have a gracious design upon thee, he causes thy Convictions to rise again, and walk again; and O then the soul is troubled, and discouraged: Alas! this Conviction is come again, but will it not die, as the last did? It will not stay long.

O poor Soul! yet this hath usually been the way of God to cause the second Convictions, or the Return of convictions to do their work thoroughly: O how many souls have found it so! Though truly it is a wonder of mercies, when first Convictions are smothered and extinguished, that God ever blows them up, and kindles them again. God often doth with young ^{1 Sam. 3.} Seekers, as he did with young *Samuel*, ^{7.} calls him again, and again, though we lie down, and sleep again, and again; it is said, he knew not the word of the Lord, for he was young.

5. Discouragement is, fears of Non-perseverance, that young ones meet with from within. O say these poor souls, what will become of us poor low Shrubs, when we see such tall and strong Cedars fall? Shall we ever be able to hold on in our way? Shall we run and not be weary, walk, and not faint? We shall never be able to continue to the far end, to run the Race with patience that is set before us.

O poor Soul! thy Perseverance in
the

the ways of God is Jesus Christs Promise, Purchase, and Charge. 1. He hath promised it, they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, even so as they shall run and not be weary; nay if they cannot, he hath promised to carry them; he carries the Lambs in his Bosom, and can any pull them out of his Bosom? If none can pull them out of his hand, much less can any pull them out of his heart. 2. Perseverance is Christs Purchase; did he die for you, and will he lose you? Will he pay the Price, and let another carry away the Purchase? Did not he die for Glory, as well as Grace? and Happiness as well as Holiness? No, no, not a soul that his blood is gone for, can be a miscarrying soul. 3. Your Perseverance is Christs charge, he hath undertaken for it to his Father: none that thou hast given me shall be lost, but I will raise it up at the last day.

2. They have Discouragement from without as well as from within, and both meeting together is a great damp to the young Seeker. The discouragement.

Isaiah 40.
31.

Isaiah 40.
11.

John 6.
37.

(II)

couragements from without are from these Causes.

I. From Satan; As soon as he sees they look Christ-ward, and Heaven-ward, he begins then to torment them; though while they were his Bondslaves, they were all the time quiet. As when the Children of *Israel* were to go out of the *Egyptian* Captivity, then *Pharoah* with all his Host pursues them; so when a soul is going out of his spiritual house of Bondage, Satan with all his might and main labours to reduce them. It is the observation of one upon the Church, the Woman in the *Revelations*, that all the while she was breeding, the Dragon did not meddle with her; but when she comes to be delivered, then he casts a flood after the woman to destroy both her and her man-child. So all the while a poor soul is under some Breathings and desires only after Christ, Satan doth not much tempt, or disturb it: but when it comes to bring forth Christ, and answer his Convictions; with a change of Conversation, O then he casts

casts a whole flood of Temptations and discouragements after it. And, alas! this proceeds from his envy to the good of your souls. He is the envious one, and his envy puts him upon laying discouragements before you: O who can stand before Envy? O poor soul! the Lord will look after thee, while thou art looking after him. Poor soul! be of good cheer, thy Temptations argue his Rage, and his Rage being great argues his time of rule in thy soul is like to be short.

2. Discouragement without proceeds from the Persecution that attends the Profession of the Gospel. While the Sun did shine upon the Gospel, it had many friends: but when it is brought under the Clouds of Persecution, many go away from Christ; as he said unto them, Will you also go away? There was I remember a Law, that the first year of marriage, none should go to War: O but may young ones say, what a discouragement it is to us, as soon as ever we desire to be married to Christ in a profession of the Gospel, we must be Sufferers,

ners, and must go to War with Persecutions. Well, poor Souls! be not discouraged; you shall not go to war on your own cost; The Lord the great Captain of your Salvation will renew your strength, and you shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint; though Persecutions meet you in the way, Jesus Christ hath his strict Charge, and he will look after them in a suffering day.

3. Discouragement from without is the Opposition they meet with from carnal Relations, such as are Enemies to the Cross of Christ. Many times such do mightily oppose these ways they are ignorant of, which is a great discouragement.

And Satan many times helps on the rage of such, and stirs up their wrath; but yet for all this, poor soul, be not discouraged, when thy way pleases the Lord he can make thine Enemies at Peace with thee, much more thy Relations. God many times has turned the heart of Relations about, as he did *Esau's* heart to his Brother *Jacob*, when pursuing of him; but if not,
there

there is a Friend nearer than a Brother (*viz.*) the Lord Jesus Christ, he will be a friend in the day of Adversity. Nay often it is observed, that as cold water makes fire burn so much the hotter; so Grace gains by opposition, by the cold water of discouragement burns so much the brighter. Thy opposition will drive thee more to look up to him, where thy strength lies, and so may be a great preservation to thee.

4. Discouragement from without is from the miscarriages of such as do profess the Lord Jesus Christ. Many that call upon the name of Christ, do not depart from iniquity, but walk loosely, deal unrighteously betwixt man and man, dishonour their Profession by an unsuitable Conversation. Others, they have more grossly backsliden from God; and whereas formerly they have been praying men in their Families, hearing men, frequenting the means of Grace, somewhat strict in their lives; now they have thrown off all these, and become like other men, as vain as other men, nay

as prophane as other men, and this is a great discouragement.

O poor Soul! notwithstanding this Discouragement, yet go on; for the ways of the Lord are the same, and if thou follow on to know the Lord, thou wilt find sweetness in his Ordinances and Truth notwithstanding this.

Application.

Is it so that young Seekers, early Seekers meet with Discouragement? Word of Use is Caution. O let young ones take heed in their first looking out after Christ,

I. Of consulting with flesh & blood; this will occasion you to yield to Discouragements. It is said of *Paul*, he Gal. 1. 16. consulted not with flesh and blood. The worst counsel in the World will flesh and blood give in the case of a mans soul. Alas poor young man! will flesh and blood say, what art thou going to do? Art thou able to deny thy self of the delights and pleasures of Youth? Art thou able to cut off a right hand, to put out a right eye,

eye, to cut the throat of a beloved *Isaac*, to let out the hearts blood of a constitutional Lust? Can thy tender years indure such hard things, as Religion is like to be attended with? Canst thou bear the scoffs and jeers of the World, the oppositions and displeasure of thy dearest Relations? And thus will flesh and blood follow thee: But alas! what is this to a poor soul that sees its precious soul lie at stake, and is in danger? Cannot, will not this soul reply to all these reasonings of flesh and blood, Get you behind me Satan? What are the greatest severities in the World to a man that sees and feels he is a lost soul for ever, if he have not a Christ?

2. Take heed in your first seekings out, and meeting with discouragements, that you pore not unbelievingly upon your discouragements. It is true, there ought to be sitting down, and counting the cost, for the want of which many poor souls after Profession have backsliden; but the poor young ones may pore too much upon their discouragements, may look

too much to the dark side of the Cloud, and say as the Prophet's man did ; Alas Master, what shall we do ? And the Prophet prayed and his eyes were opened, and then he saw the Mountains full of Horsemen and Chariots, and now he crys out, More are they that are with us, than they that are against us. O thus it is with many young ones ! they cry, Alas what shall we do ? And are utterly discouraged until God come and open their eyes.

<sup>2 Kings 6:
15.</sup>

3. Take heed you young Seekers under your discouragements of believing diabolical suggestions, that shall be cast into your hearts against the ways of God : O ! Satan will be ever suggesting one thing or other into your hearts ; that Christ is a hard Master, that his Commandments are grievous, that the burdens of the command of the Cross are intolerable, and that in the way to *Christ* are Mountains and Hills inaccessible, too high for such short breathed Creatures to ascend or travel over : And O how many poor souls by such suggestions

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have been exceedingly discouraged in their pursuits after Christ! O but this is dangerous to take counsel of an Enemy: would any of you do so in other Cases?

4. Caution to young Seekers under discouragements, Take heed of giving over seeking, because you find not at first what you seek: This poor souls are very prone to. Why should I wait on the Lord any longer? (said that King.) O so say many poor souls, why should we seek Christ any longer? Pray any longer? Hear any longer? *Solomon* advises in this case, dig for Wisdom as for hidden treasure, and seek her as silver. They that dig in such Mines as Gold and Silver, do not give over, because they find not it first: O no! it lies deep, and they must search with great pains and patience. The poor woman sought her lost Groat till she found it: O continue seeking to the far end, till you find: O it is very dangerous to give over, you see the Promise is, *you shall find*.

5. Caution to young Seekers: O
take

take heed when you are under discouragements, you do not murmur against God in your Hearts, and say as those poor *Israelites* did, *would to God we had never come out of Egypt*; what was the matter? They meet now with great difficulties and discouragements, and their hearts fell a murmuring, which in the New Testament is called a going back in their Hearts: O this doth much dishonour God; as if he could not in his own everlasting arms, carry poor souls over all their difficulties.

6. Caution, Let young Seekers take heed of drawing up hasty conclusions against themselves, because of present discouragements; which they are very prone to do.

O how many poor souls rashly conclude, for their part, they are cut off, and their hope is lost; as *David*: but he said in his haste, *all men are lyars*: so say many poor souls, I doubt *Preachers* will be found lyars, and flatterers unto me: Alas, did not poor *Jeremy*, under this discouragement, break out into that sad conclusion against God,

Psal. 10. 7.
11.

Jer. 15.
18.

Wilt thou be a liar unto me, and altogether as waters that fail? So say poor young ones; alas, how should such weak worms, as we are, get through such difficulties, and discouragements? and as it is said of the Children of Israel, in their Travel to the Good Land, so may it be said of young Travellers, Their Souls were discouraged because of the way.

Numb. 21.
4.

2. *Use*, Is it so that morning Seekers of *Jesus Christ* meet with great discouragements? then it is an *Use* of *Direction*, what shall poor young Inquirers do under all their discouragements? Young Travellers you know stand in need of direction, and so do young Inquirers after Christ.

1. *Direction*, Under your discouragements be often looking up to *Christ*, as the *Alpha* and *Omega* of the whole Work (*viz.*) as the Author of it, and finisher of it. Did you ever understand the Glorious Name and Title of *Christ*, I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*; what is the meaning of this? it notes out the Deity and Eternity of *Christ*, he is the *first* and the *last* (so the most

Rev. I. II.

most Interpreters) but there seems to be something more in it, it notes also the Stability and Omnipotency of *Christ* to execute threatnings, and perform promises, as you may see in the places quoted in the Margin, That *Christ* who hath begun a good work, is the *Omega* of it, he will finish it. Now do you look up to *Christ* to this very end, under this very notion and title; Lord Jesus the work is thine; the hands of *Zerubbabel* (as was said in that day) hath laid the foundation, and the hands of *Zerubbabel* must finish the building; Lord, the *foundation stone*, *Grace*, was of thy laying, and so must the *Top-stone* of *Glory* also: Do you thus say to *Christ*, when you look up to him? We have the direction expressly given us by the Apostle, Look up to Jesus as the author and finisher of our Faith. *Beza* reads, the Captain of our faith and looking. The word signifies, such a looking, as calls off the eye from all other objects that represent the difficulty of the race; and should not young Souldiers look to their Captain? In the greatest discouragements

Isa. 41. 4.

44. 6.

Heb. 12. 2.

that we can be under, we must look to him; therefore God sayes, he hath given him for a Leader and Commander to the people. He is called the Captain of our Salvation, alluding to *Joshua* the great Captain of the *Old Testament*, under whose Conduct the children of *Israel* marcht to the Good Land. Well then poor Soul, do you look to him for finishing the whole work: This made *Paul* so confident of the poor *Philippians*, being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of *Christ*.

2. *Direction* to young Seekers, under all their discouragements, is this, Be sure a good foundation be laid: if there be not a good foundation, your discouragements will sink you, or else spoyle all your convictions. You know they which built upon the sand, when discouragements beat in upon them, then the house fell; but it was not so with the house upon the Rock; why, what was the matter? the house that fell, digged not deep enough to lay the foundation; and

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we read of the Seed that withered, because it had not depth of earth : O but now a good foundation laid will bear you up under all your discouragements. And what is the reason of the Apostasie of young ones, who once have been warm in the wayes of God ; alas, the foundation at first was not well laid. Mat. 13.6.

If it be asked what I mean by young ones laying a good foundation, I answer, there is a two-fold foundation in this sense, First, there is a foundation as to state, as to the state of an immortal soul, and thus *Christ* is the foundation ; there is no other foundation for the hopes of eternal salvation to be bottomed and built upon ; another foundation can no man lay (says the Apostle) and therefore the Rock the wise builders built upon was *Christ* : O then be sure to let young ones get an interest in *Christ*, be built upon him ; be bottomed upon him, and then they will weather all their discouragements comfortably.

2. There is a foundation as to Principles, and Doctrinals, after which young ones should look in their first

seeking after *Christ*; therefore we read of being built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, *Jesus Christ* himself being the chief Corner Stone; this foundation was the Principles, and the Doctrine of the Apostle; therefore we read of the twelve names of the Apostles of the Lamb, being written upon the twelve foundations of the *New Jerusalem*; and alas, how often do souls miscarry for want of Gospel Principles? I never knew an unprincipled Professor, but at one turn or other he would desert the Lord Jesus. You young ones may have stirring desires, some stirring affection and convictions, but alas many times you neglect Principles. When you meet with a discouragement, you will fall back, if you be not laid in with Principles. Do not fish begin to stink first in the head? If the Leprosie was in the head, the High Priest was to pronounce him utterly unclean. When Satan cannot keep youth in profaneness, then he will labour to poyson them with Erroneous Principles.

3. *Direction*, to young inquirers after the Lord *Jesus Christ*, is this, Acquaint your selves with the promises of the Gospel, and the way of Faith. Mostly young ones over-look believing, they follow humbling work so fast; it is a piece of admirable skill to put them both together, humbling work, and believing work. O but hard work is this to be humbled under the sense of sin, and believe for the pardon of it, at the same time. Usually young Converts sorrow is too legal; they are the sweetest tears for sin that flow from faith's eyes; they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn. Young Seekers are all for mourning, and little study the way of believing; but go to the Promise, and acquaint thy self with the fulness, and freeness, and futableness, and unchangeableness of the Promises; these would be great helps to you in seeking after *Christ*. Let young ones acquaint themselves with two or three things in Promises.

1. That Gospel Promises run to weak Grace. They are prone to question

tion whether the Promise belong to them or no; why so? O they are such weak Creatures, have so little strength against sin, so little power against corruption: O but can thou say, Lord, here is truth of Grace, and Lord, I walk before thee with a true and perfect heart? O poor Soul, I tell thee the Promises run to uprightness in heart and truth in the inward parts.

2. Let Young Ones acquaint themselves with this, that Gospel Promises look over all unworthiness in their objects. If thou be the object of Gods love, Promises overlook all thy unworthiness, how is his love free else? therefore we see the Promises running down to the vilest of sinners. O how doth this temptation of unworthiness stand in the way of many a Soul to Christ? and hath kept many a Soul and Christ a long time at distance? but we may see this answered in the Promise.

3. Let them know that the accomplishment of Promises doth not depend upon any thing in the Creature, but in God himself; this hath been a great

great temptation, to look for some qualifications in themselves, and so they have been spinning some webb out of their own bowels; but alas, this can never be a garment to them! God accomplishes his Promises for his own Names sake.

4. Let Young Seekers, under their discouragements, know, that all the Promises are Yea and Amen in *Christ Jesus* (*viz.*) they all receive in him a full ratification and accomplishment; so that he is undertaker to see them all have their performance. 2 Cor. 1.
20.

5. Let Young Ones, under their discouragements, know, that Gospel Promises will carry the Soul through all difficulties they can meet with in their way; there is that in a Promise, that will hold up the head, when ready to sink in the very swellings of *Jordan*; this made *Jacob* plead so hard with God, in his difficulty, that old Promise, Lord, did not thou say, thou wouldst do me good: therefore when *Joshua* had such hard service to go upon, in the conquest of the Land of *Canaan*, he gave him that Promise, *I*
will

will never leave thee, and Abraham when to leave his Country, I am God all-sufficient.

4. *Direction to Young Seekers under their discouragements; study well the Righteousness of Christ.* This is very hard with young ones, to get out of self: O how many years are poor Souls before they get off the bottom of their own Righteousness? they are prone to seek some things in themselves, as *Israel* of old, who sought to obtain Righteousness in a way of works, but could not; every temptation, every objection is too hard for a poor Soul, until it get acquaintance with the Righteousness of *Christ*; but now when a Soul can call the Lord Jesus, by that Name, *The Lord my Righteousness*, in this Name every temptation, every objection, every doubt is answered in the Righteousness of *Christ*. His Righteousness is opposed to our guilt: If it be thy nakedness that is thy objection, it is answered in *Christ's* Righteousness, for it is the best robe; if it be thy deformity, here it is answered, *Christ's* Righteousness is a Believers

Believers comeliness ; thou art comely with the comeliness that I have put upon thee ; this is the beautiful garment that a Believer puts on to go into the presence of God withall, and now all deformity is covered. The poor Infant in its blood, thus was covered, and rendred comely. Is it thy filthiness, that becomes an objection ? here it is answered, the blood of *Christ* is cleansing blood ; who loved us, and washed us in his blood.

5. *Direction* to young Seekers under discouragements ; Let *Jesus Christ* hear often from you ; when should *Jesus Christ* hear from you, but when discouragements are upon you ? these are to send you to *Christ*, these are to bring you upon your knees. We read of the Spouse crying to *Christ* ; where was she ? in the secret place of the stairs, the Text tells us, in a discouraged, persecuted condition ; yet says *Christ*, *Thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance comely*. O poor Soul ! under all thy discouragements, *Christ* loves to hear from thee. O but will he hear such a poor, stubborn, brutish creature,

2 Cant. 142

Jer. 31. 18.

ture, as I have been? Yea, I have heard *Ephraim* bemoaning himself; poor *Ephraim* was discouraged, and yet goes to God, and cries, Lord I have a brutish heart, Lord I have a stubborn heart, as a Bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; yet Lord turn thou me: here was his Prayer, and O how this took, and melted the heart of God, that his bowels broke forth, *Is Ephraim my dear Son?*

6. *Direction* to young Seekers, under their discouragements; pore not upon thy discouragements too much. O how ordinary is this! This is to look upon the black and dark side of the cloud; what, is there not a bright side? Many poor Souls by doing thus, have entred into great temptations; you lead your selves into temptations by this means; but this hath been cautioned against in the former use, therefore I shall not enlarge upon it here.

2. *Observation* from this Text, we observed, was this, *That Young Seekers, or Morning Seekers are much upon the heart*

heart of Christ. It is evident in the Text, it being a Promise, by way of encouragement to such poor Souls; O they are so much on his heart, he would not have them discouraged: O he knows they are soon discouraged; therefore they are upon his heart to encourage them.

1. He doth encourage them by accepting of their weak beginnings; when a Scholar is a young beginner, he is soon discouraged, but when he sees his Master takes notice, and accepts in good part what he doth, this doth much encourage him; and so a young Apprentice: Thus it is with a poor Soul at its first enquiring after *Christ*; when it sees the Lord accepts and takes in good part its weak motions after Christ, its weak affections, and desires, O it is encouraged; will the Lord accept of any thing such a poor Creature doth? have I any offering that can find favour in his sight? what, such a poor Soul, that am but of yesterday, that am but newly begun to peep out of my profaneness? who have but newly turned my back on the
sinful

sinful vanities of youth ? This was typed out in Gods acceptance of the first fruits, though never so small ; we read the sheaf of their first fruits of their harvest was to be given to the Priest, and he was to wave it before the Lord, that it might be accepted. If it be but a poor sheaf, it is accepted, though thou carried out precious Seed weeping ; and it may be hast not gotten thy sheaves to return with, yet peradventure thou hast gotten one sheaf ; Well, carry that to *Christ*, thy High Priest, to wave before the Lord, it may be accepted for you : Yea, if it be but a handful of green ears you bring to the Lord, a few green desires, and affections, they shall be accepted with the Lord. We read of a glorious work begun in the day of *Zachary*, in the building of the Temple, and great discouragements the Instruments of that Glorious Work met withall ; there was a mountain in the way, but all is encouraged by this, *The hands of Zerubbabel (saith God) hath laid the foundation, and the hands of Zerubbabel shall finish the building.*

For

Lev. 23.
11, 13.

Lev. 2. 14.

Zach. 4.
10.

For who hath despised the day of small things? saith the Lord; there were some poor beginnings, and God would not discourage them. So I say in this case, who hath despised the day of small things? what though convictions be but small, affections small, grace small? yet God accepts of this day of small things, and thus encourages them.

2. *Jesus Christ* doth encourage young Seekers, by perswading their hearts, that they shall find favour and grace in the sight of God sooner or later. Did he ever say to the House of *Jacob*, seek ye my face in vain? O no sayes the poor Soul, I am under a Promise, *they that seek shall find*, therefore the poor Soul is of good courage. O though a person doth meet with discouragements, yet sayes the Soul, I shall find, though I digg long first, cry long first, seek long first, yet the good hope to speed at last becomes a great encouragement: and the contrary is as great a discouragement. Why should I wait on the Lord any longer, pray any longer, hear any

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longer,

longer, seek any longer ? this weakens and enfeebles the Soul exceedingly. What kept up *Jacob* in wrestling all night, but a secret hope, and sweet perswasion that he should for all the opposition he met withall, come off conquerour, and at last get the blessing ? How is it with your souls, young ones, as to this thing ? are you perswaded your praying, seeking, will not be in vain ? O this is a great encouragement.

3. The *Lord Jesus Christ* doth encourage young Seekers after him, by making the yoke of *Christ* easier to them every day than other. Every yoke or burden is hardest at first. O ! poor Souls are ready to say of the yoke of *Christ*, at first, as they did of the yoke of Circumcision ; wherefore put you upon us a yoke, that neither we nor our Fathers are able to bear ? O but this yoke of *Christ* is made more easie to the soul every day than other. Now an Apprentice, or a Scholar, when he finds his work easier and easier to him, O then how is he encouraged to go on it ? O now (saith the soul)

foul) I find that Scripture true, *Christ's yoke is an easie yoke, and his burden is a light burden*; and that word I now find to be true, and none of his Commandments are grievous. Now it may here be demanded, How doth *Christ* make his yoke to young Seekers easier every day than other?

Mat. 11.
28.

1. By an increase of love in them to *Christ*. As love grows up in the Soul, difficulties are not dreadful; the dread of them is taken off; when the spark is blown into a vehement flame, what difficulty can stand before it? Who can stand before envy? But here it may be said, who can stand before love? Many waters cannot quench it. Is not love the greatest conquerour in the world? How evident is this in mens love to their lusts! O what desperate adventures do poor Sinners make to get to their lusts! As *David's* worthies did break through an Host for the water of the well of *Bethlehem*, so do thousands of Sinners, for love to their sins, break through a whole Host of Convictions, Reproofs, Admonitions, Counsels, and all for love to their

finis. And so love to *Jesus Christ*, as it increases, the commands of *Christ* are pleasant; the wayes of wisdom are wayes of pleasantness; we take pleasure to serve such as we love.

2. *Christ* makes his yoke easier every day than other, and so encourages young Seekers, by making Duty a delight. So long as Duty is a burden, there will be grievousness in it, but when it once is matter of delight and priviledge, O then it grows easie. Delight makes every thing easie, though difficult in it self. Alas, a poor Soul at first, looks upon the yoke of *Christ* as a task, as Scholars have their tasks at first; but after delight in them, Prayer now becomes a delight, and the Soul can say as the Spouse did, *I sit down under his shadow with great delight*. Communion with God is a great delight; reading and hearing is a great delight; and now these duties go sweetly and easily on.

3. He makes his yoke an easie yoke, by giving them to see a difference betwixt this yoke, and the yoke of Satan. And now sayes the poor Soul, the yoke

yoke of Satan would have prest me down to Hell, I should have drawn my self damned in the Devils yoke, and O now how heavy do I feel it ! My sins are gone over my head as a burden, yea, as too heavy a burden for me to bear. O now when a poor sinner compares yokes and burdens, O how easie doth *Christ's* yoke become !

4. The *Lord Jesus Christ* doth encourage young Seekers, by giving them hearts to wait upon him, and sweetly and secretly renewing their strength in waiting on him. While there is a waiting Spirit, there is encouragement ; this was the great encouragement of *Jacob's* Soul, a wrestling frame was kept up in him. Wherever a Soul continues a waiter and wrestler, there is hope it will come off conquerour ; therefore we read of that blessed Promise, *The youths shall faint, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength ;* strength comes in upon your waiting. You young waiters, he will not let you wait upon him for nothing, if your

Isa. 40. 30.

31.

Psal. 27.
ult.

hands wax weak he will strengthen them, there shall be a secret invisible strength sent in, that shall still keep you waiting. O but may Souls say, we shall be weary after a while for all this. O no poor Souls you shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint : a poor young runner shall hold on, and hold out. That word in the Psalms is of the like comfort, to waiters, *Wait on the Lord and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart.* I say, wait on the Lord. O but sayes the poor Soul, I am discouraged, I know not what to do, I shall sink under them ; wait on the Lord, and what then ? the Lord will strengthen thee in waiting against all thy temptations, both within and without ; the Lord is good to them that wait for him ; and thou shalt find it so.

5. The Lord doth encourage the souls of young Seekers by giving them tastes of his love ; for many times, at first conversion he gives more of it than he doth afterwards ; this is to encourage Souls, and draw them on more to love him and seek him, and follow after him.

him. When the Prodigal came newly home, at his first return, O how he treated him! Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and a ring on his hand, and shooes on his feet. If the Lord should not give young Seekers some sweet tastes of his love, they would be discouraged in seeking after him: But now they that taste how good and gracious the Lord is, they come unto him.

6. The *Lord Jesus* doth encourage the Souls of young Seekers by passing by, and pardoning their infirmities in their approaches to him, and graciously accepting, and owning what is his. There is something of Gods, and something of their own in every duty, and a great deal of their own to a little of *Christs*, a great deal of dross to a little silver, a great deal of water to a little wine; and O sayes the poor young Seeker, I am discouraged, will the Lord accept of such an offering as this? If thou shouldst offer this to thy Governour would he accept of it? O poor Soul see what he sayes, I have eaten my honey with my honey comb;

not only the honey but the comb; because of the dross he doth not refuse all; he knows how to separate the comb from the dross, the infirmities of a duty from any thing of the spirit in a duty; he will pick out what is his own, and pardon what is thine.

7. The Lord *Jesus* doth encourage the Souls of young Seekers, by helping them to believe the precious Promises made to them. There are not more precious Promises made to any sort of sinners, or sort of people, than to young Seekers after *Christ*. Is not this a precious Promise in the Text? Of all persons you shall not be disappointed, you shall seek and find; *He shall carry the Lambs in his bosome, and gather them with his arm, and shall gently lead them that are with young.* O what a Soul-reviving-Promise is this! are not Lambs weak creatures? but in his bosome shall they get both warmth and strength. The old Proverb shall not hold in this case, *The weakest go by the walls*; if they cannot go, he can carry them, and not carry them on his back, but in his bosome, which

Isa. 40. 11.

is the easiest carriage, and the safest carriage. O what a sweet shepherd is this, that nourishes his Lambs in his bosome! And is not that also a rich and glorious Promise, *A bruised Reed shall he not break, nor shall he quench the smoaking flax, until he bring judgement unto victory.* O poor Soul, can there be greater encouragements than in this Promise? What is a weaker thing than a bruised Reed? what is a poorer thing than smoaking flax? soon extinguished, soon trodden out; but the Lord will make weak ones strong, weak Grace shall be victorious Grace, (thou art a poor weak worm, it may be) the Lord chooses things that are not, to confound things that are.

8. The Lord encourages such as are young Seekers of him, by watering the buddings of his own Grace in their Souls. Grace is so tender a plant, that it will live in no soyle where it is not well watered; it cannot be in any soyle but it must be watered. He takes notice of the buddings of the Pomegranate, or the opening

opening of it. When a poor soul begins first in its openings to desire after *Jesus Christ*, in its faith, in its love to *Christ*, O then these are watered with precious quickning influences from above, which makes them spring up and grow apace; he breaths upon his young plants, *Blow O south wind that the spices may flow out*; these breathings are influences from the Spirit.

I. Reason, why the Lord *Jesus Christ* doth encourage young Seekers, because in their first setting out to seek *Christ*, they meet with most temptations. O now when Satan is like to lose his prey, how doth this greedy Lion roar? when he sees he is like to be disappointed, how doth he follow the Soul with wrath and rage? Now the greater the rage of Satan is against poor Souls, the more bowels hath *Christ* yearning towards them; as it is his great office to succour those that are tempted. When *Christ* was born in *Jerusalem*, there was a great uproar. O poor Soul! thou wondrest what is the matter, there is an uproar, a tumult in thy own Spirit, a combate within, and thou

thou begin'st to be restless in Spirit, & look'st up to God in this condition. O what if *Christ* be forming in thy soul?

There are two things make Satan bestir himself against morning Seekers;

1. It is his envy: he is the envious one, he envies the good and happiness of every poor Soul, therefore he pursues thee.

2. His pride that his dominion should be lessened, that he should lose a subject, this makes him rage.

2. *Reason*, why the Lord *Jesus Christ* doth encourage poor morning Seekers, because he will allure them after himself. This is the method of *Jesus Christ*, to allure by encouragements young Converts. This the Lord did with the people of *Israel*, *Therefore I* Hos. 2. 15. *will allure her into the Wilderness*, persuade her: and sometimes it is called *drawing*, *with loving kindness have I drawn thee*. A poor Soul, by being encouraged is allured after *Christ* spoken as some Expositors say after the manner of Lovers, that give one another presents, not only pledges, but as baits

baits to allure and inflame further affections.) Every encouragement the morning Seeker hath from *Christ*, the more doth his love burn after *Christ*.

Joh. 36.
37.

3. *Reason*, why the Lord *Jesus* doth encourage morning Seekers after *Christ*, because this is the will of the Father, and whatsoever is his Fathers will, is his will: they run into one another, *I and my Father is one*. Thus he argues in that famous place, *I will in no wise cast out them that come unto me*; why, this is the will of my Father; God will have young Seekers encouraged; who ever be cared for in the family, the Children must.

4. *Reason*, because they are soonest discouraged. O if poor Souls at the first work get not some little taste of love, some comfort and refreshment, alas their souls faint within them. That is the reason he will carry the Lambs in his bosome, they are soon wearied, cannot go, are prone to be tired, and sit still; O but this tender-hearted Shepherd shall carry them, that is the reason of that Promise, *he shall not quench the smoking flax*, (*viz.*) he shall

not

not carry it roughly, but tenderly towards Souls, under weak beginnings of Grace. The smoaking flax is soon put out, and the bruised Reed is soon broken ; so is a poor weak young beginner in Grace soon discouraged ; but the Lord shall not do it (*viz.*) he will do the contrary for it, he will strengthen, he will encourage it.

5. *Jesus Christ* doth encourage young morning Seekers after himself, because it is his own work in their Souls, and he that begins a good work will carry it on. *Jesus Christ* must needs encourage the breathings of his own Spirit in the Soul ; he is tender of his own begettings : every Creature that begets, seeks to maintain that life, so doth *Jesus Christ*. The work of Regeneration is called the New Creature, it is of his Creation ; we are his workmanship created to good works in *Christ Jesus*. God will encourage his own workmanship.

Application.

Is it so that poor morning Seekers
are

are encouraged by *Jesus Christ*?

1. It informs us then of the love of *Christ*, that it runs to the weakest of Believers, as well as the strongest of Believers, to those that are in the lowest form in *Christ's* School, as well as those that are in the highest, to the weakest of the flock, as well as the strongest, to the youngest children, as well as the eldest. There are three sorts of Christians, as *John* ranks them, *Fathers, young Men, and little Children.*

Joh. 12.
13.

2. It informs us of the evil and sin of the desponding frame of heart which is often found with young Seekers (*viz.*) if they seek a little and find not at first, then they are discontented, and discouraged, and then why should I wait any longer, seek any longer, pray any longer, mourn any longer, hear any longer? O this is an evil frame of heart, you see *Christ* is very loth you should be discouraged.

1. This desponding and being discouraged, argues much shortness and impatience of spirit in you, that you are not willing to let the Lord alone with the management of his own work.

work. *He that believes makes not hast*: Psal. 40.

A poor Soul may be too impatient after comfort, and discoveries of love; 1, 2.

but *David* came to this frame of heart, to wait patiently upon the Lord, then the Lord heard his cry, and delivered him out of the horrible pit.

2. Doth not this speak much pride to be in the heart? What is it but pride, that you are not willing to wait? Alas poor Souls, should not you say as the Church did, *I will put my mouth in the dust, if there may be hope*. What is non-subjection to the will of God but pride?

3. It informs what is Ministers duties, and Believers duties. This was the charge of *Christ* to *Peter*, and in him to the Gospel Ministry succeeding him, *feed my Lambs*. There are some that Joh. 21. 15. concern themselves too little with the Lambs of Christ, they are so taken up with the Hee-goats of the flocks, that they forget there are Lambs in the flock, that there are Hinds in the flock, poor timorous creatures startled with any thing, for so are the Hinds. Can we write after a better Copy than our Lord

Lord and Master hath set us ? He carries the Lambs in his bosome, and should not substitute Shepherds do so ? He took little children in his arms, and should not we do so ? And this is also the duty of others, Fathers and Mothers, when you see any thing of Jesus breaking out, any desires, any good inclinations, any convictions of sin ; O you should encourage these beginnings, this is *Christ*-like, and the contrary is Devil-like, *Herod*-like, which undoubtedly was stirred up by Satan to kill *Christ* in the cradle (*viz.*) while young, to seek for the life of the young Child ; *Pharoah*-like to throw the Male Children into the River ; Pharisee-like neither to enter yourselves, nor let others enter. Masters, how should they encourage their Servants, when they see any thing of *Christ* appear in them. The day is coming, you & your servants will stand before the Lord to give an account how you have carried it towards them, whether you have encouraged them or no ; and I am afraid the evidence of some Servants will be received against their Masters.

Masters. Are not such Masters monsters, rather than Masters, as shall way-lay the salvation of a servants Soul? Would not the rich man have prevented the coming of his brethren to hell? What can there be any love to Souls in hell? (Expositors tell us, that their going thither would have added to his torments, because by his example they had sinned.) O will not this add to your torments, and misery in another world, that you have been the occasion of so many poor Souls miscarrying under your roof?

4. It informs us of the infinite condescension of *Jesus Christ*, that he will look after poor young enquirers, after poor morning Seekers. Is not this condescension even to admiration, to carry Lambs in his arms, to nourish poor Lambs in his own bosome? that he should trouble himself with such poor sinful worms? May not such souls say, how is it Lord that thou should manifest thy self to us, and not to the world, and not to the rest of my brothers, and not to the rest of my sisters, and not to the rest of my relations?

E

2. Use.

2. Use. Is it so that the *Lord Jesus Christ* is the encourager of poor morning Seekers after himself? Then it is a word of *Comfort* to young Seekers. Be of good cheer, as they said to the blind man, *for the Lord calleth*; for the Lord encourages you. O all you morning Seekers, be of good courage, and wait on the Lord, and he will strengthen your hearts; I say wait upon the Lord.

1. Be of good comfort, you are the travail of *Christs* Soul, and therefore he will look after you. His suffering was his travail. O the pangs and throwes of a travailing woman! We say such have hard labour. O you poor young Converts, inquirers after *Christ*, he hath had hard labour for you. O the pangs of his Fathers displeasure, that he hath endured, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Here was one bitter pang, and his Soul was sorrowful unto death: There was another pang, and throwes came upon him so fast, that he died travailing for the Salvation and Redemption of poor Sinners. Therefore we read that sweet word,

word, *He shall see his seed*; he shall have Seed come out of his sufferings, which are called the travail of his Soul. And is not this a great comfort? He will surely encourage his own travail: O poor Souls he hath travailed for you; therefore he will encourage you. Isa. 53. 10, 11.

2. Second word of Comfort to young Seekers is this, you are his joy, his delight, *He shall see the travail of his Soul, and be satisfied, (viz.)* it shall be matter of great contentation and delight to see his sufferings issue, in the bringing forth a Seed and Remnant, that shall be saved. As one delights in his children, so doth *Christ* in his young Seekers, *Behold, I and the Children thou hast given me* (which is spoken of *Christ*, and quoted out of the Prophets.) He rejoyces, you see, in his Seed. O what joy was there when the young prodigal returned home to his Father's. The whole parable preaches this Doctrine. A man delights in his youngest children. As a man delights in his nursery, so doth *Jesus Christ* in his garden; he hath his young nursery. Heb. 12. 13.

3. Word of Comfort to young Seekers, He hath accommodated Promises to suit with the conditions of such. O what a care had *Christ* of such, that he would give Promises on purpose to such? As to their weakness in Grace, he would strengthen such poor bruised reeds; as to the dispensations of God, which they fear they are not able to keep pace with, *He shall carry the Lambs in his bosome*; they cannot go they are so weak, he shall carry them. As for the temptations within or without, *Out of the mouths of Babes and Sucklings, he shall ordain strength*, to still the enemy, and the avenger. There is not any condition, but you may find a Promise accommodated for that condition.

Heb. 1. 13.
Spoken of
Christ.

4. Word of Comfort to morning Seekers, You are *Christ's* charge; *Behold I and the Children thou hast given me*. Now upon the Fathers donation, and the Sons acceptance they begin to be his charge; therefore he is the great Trustee for poor Souls. He stands engaged to give his Father an account of them all at the last day; and will not

not *Christ* be faithful to his trust ? nay to the trust God the Father hath committed to him ? Therefore he loses not a soul. They pass under the hand of him that tells them again ; all that God the Father hath told out to his Son, the Son tells back again to God the Father.

5. Word of Comfort to morning Seekers is this, This argues the great love God bears to your Souls, to call you betimes, to call you while you are young. O how many go down to Hell, while the milk is in their breasts and marrow in their bones ! though young in years, yet old in sin, &c. O at what a rate do some young ones sin ? How expert are they grown in that cursed trade ? And that thou should'st be called to seek after *Christ* in thy young dayes, O what a comfort is this ! Here is one taken and another left.

O but sayes a poor Soul, Alas ! I can get no comfort, as yet I am a poor troubled Soul, much cast down and dejected.

They that sow in tears shall reap in

joy ; it is thy seed-time now, therefore thou must not expect a crop presently, the Seed must lie in the ground. Let your Seed-prayers, and Seed-tears lie in Gods hand a while ; *Light is sown for the Righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.*

O but sayes a poor Soul, I am followed with temptations, since that I begun to seek after *Christ*, and I know not what to do.

Poor Soul, his rage is great, because his time is short ; now thou art coming out of captivity to him, he is pursuing thee to reduce thee to the old house of bondage ; thy temptations do argue, the *Lord Jesus Christ* is about casting out of Satan ; therefore he is angry.

Psal. 40.
ult.

O but I am a poor needy creature ; well, but doth not the Lord think of thee ?

Heb. 5.3.

O but I am a weak Creature.
He will perfect strength in weakness,
out of the mouth of Babes, &c.

O but I am an ignorant Creature.

Well, he can have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way.

The

The last *Use* is of *Exhortation* to Young Ones, to seek the Lord betimes, and make supplication to him. If thou seek early after God, the Word is, *Thou shalt find him*. Remember your Creator in the dayes of your youth, &c. Leave all for Christ, sell all for the pearl of price. Seek him while he is to be found.

The third *Observation* we are now come unto from the words, is this :

That morning Seekers shall be sure and certain finders.

They that seek me early shall find me; to be sure such find me; whoever miss of me, they shall not.

1. By morning Seekers is meant, one that seeks the Lord betimes. So *Job* phrases it, *If thou seek the Lord, and make supplication unto him*. To remember our Creator in the dayes of our youth. Our youth is our morning time to seek *Christ* in; our age is our afternoon : now it is not so good seeking in the middle of the day, nor in the afternoon, as it is in the morning.

2. By morning Seekers are meant, such as do earnestly seek the Lord Je-

Job 8. 5.
The word Seeking we find used in several places : Significant quærere diligenter & cum cura. Daresh est summo iudicio quærere. So *Ecc. 1. 13.*

Job 8. 5.
Shahar aurare seu diluculare signifies diligently to seek, or rise timely in the morning. *Prov. 11. 27.*

fus : Are there any poor Souls that do
 more earnestly seek the Lord Jesus than
 such as give up themselves betimes to
Hos. 6. 15. *Christ ? In their affliction they will seek*
me early ; (viz.) they will seek me
earnestly, they will seek me in the
morning ; because what is done in the
morning is done with most vigour and
fervency. O ! morning Seekers, how
vigorously in Soul do they seek the
Lord Jesus ? they do not seek like So-
lomon's sluggard, as though they cared
not whether they found or no ; but
they seek with all their heart, which
Jer. 29. 13. *we read a Promise made to ; And you*
shall seek me, and find me, when you shall
search for me with all your hearts.

3. By a morning Seeker of *Christ*,
 is meant a soul that the Lord is visit-
 ing with the day of his power. The
 morning is the beginning of the day,
 so the morning is the beginning of the
Hos. 6. 3. work of Grace. The morning of a
 day of Grace we read of; the Go-
 ings of God prepared as the morn-
 ing. The morning light is gradual,
 so is the dawns of the day of Grace
Pro. 4. 18. upon the Soul ; as that word is, *The*
path

path of the *Just* is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. There is the dawning of the day, and the perfect day. When the day-star from on High first ariseth in the soul; this is the morning Seeker, it had not light to seek by, until the day-star arose in the heart; and now morning light is come in to let the soul see the misery of its dark and undone estate without Christ. O now it is a seeker in this light after the Lord Jesus, &c.

4. By a morning Seeker is meant, a Soul waiting for more appearances, more arisings of the day-star in and upon the Soul: As David saith, *My Soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that wait for the morning*; more than the watchmen that wait for the morning. And thus, as soon as poor Babes in Grace are begotten to Christ, they are children of the light. All young Converts are children of the light; they are looking out for more light, more light of Grace, and more light of Comfort. Thus doth a poor morning Seeker wait for light to shine into his dark heart.

5. By

5. By a morning Seeker is meant, a poor Soul that stands upon the watch-tower of Observation, taking notice of the first breakings in of light: as the watchmen waited for the first peep and dawning of the day, that they might offer the sacrifice appointed for the morning. So a poor morning Seeker is one that observes the first convictions that dawn upon it, the first light of the spirit that shines into it; and it stands by the crevice and will not away; but here is such an Ordinance, that God first convinced me by, first illuminated me. And thus the Soul keeps an observation of the gradual breakings in of light.

6. By morning Seekers is meant, a poor Soul in its first breathings, out of the desires and wants of the Soul to *Christ*; *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning. In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.* Here is the morning, a time for prayer. I will order my prayer in the morning. In the morning of a begun work of Grace, O what directing is there of prayer to God? A praying Soul is a morning

Psal. 5.3.

morning Seeker. Alas! the Soul prayed not before, but now a day of Grace hath visited it, it may be said of him, *behold he prays.*

7. By morning Seekers is understood, a Soul that looks out for some encouragement by way of answer to prayer. In the morning will I direct my prayer and look up (the word signifies, diligently to look out for something that is coming towards us.) O! a morning Seeker enquires for some answer to prayer, some encouragement to animate it in its pursuits after *Christ*.

8. Lastly, By a morning Seeker is meant, one that seeks with hope and joy, that seeks cheerfully in expectation to find. The Spirits are most cheerful in the morning. O how it glads the poor weary Centinel to think of the approaching day! Thus it is with a poor Soul seeking *Christ*; O thinks this Soul, sorrow may continue for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

Reasons why early and morning Seekers shall be sure and certain finders.

1. Reason, why early or morning Seekers

Luke 11.

Seekers shall be sure and certain finders, because such are importunate Seekers, and it is importunate praying, that is prevailing prayer with God; therefore we read that Parable teaching Souls how to seek; for his importunity he arose and gave him; the word is (*Impudence*;) there is a holy Impudence that will not be said nay. O! this God loves in all Seekers, but especially in morning Seekers, they are usually importunate.

1. Young Seekers have strong corruptions to combat with. The corruptions of youth are strong; and when strong corruptions meet with strong convictions, how should a principle of Grace live in the Soul but by importunate seeking *Christ*? The stronger the corruption, the more importunate the wrestling of the Soul under it; strong corruptions where there is a begun work of Grace, cause the soul to put forth strong cries and supplications.

2. Usually morning Seekers are importunate Seekers, because they have strong temptations. We read of *John* writing

writing to young men, *I write unto you* ^{1 Epist. of}
young men, because you are strong, and ^{Joh. 2. 14.}
have overcome the wicked one. Then

young Seekers are combatants not only with their own corruptions, but the wicked ones temptations. *Paul*, when a messenger of Satan was sent him to buffet him, what did he do? He besought the Lord thrice, (*viz.*) frequently or importunately. Temptations will put upon importunate Seeking the Lord Jesus, where there is a principle of Grace in the Soul. O are not young mens temptations stronger than others? The temptations of young men to vain company, O how hard to overcome is this! hath not this one temptation been the Rock that many a young man hath split his Soul on for ever? *Solomon* setting out the sinful state of youth, being led by the strange woman, sayes, *I discerned a young man void of understanding;* but where was he? The Text tells you, amongst the *Simple Ones*.

Prov. 7. 7.

3. Morning Seekers are importunate Seekers, they are in their first love. Love will be importunate; *I remember*

Jer. 2. 2. *member the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine Esponsals. Their affections are strong.*

4. Morning Seekers are importunate seekers, their convictions are strong. Now where there are strong convictions, there will be importunate Seeking; morning convictions are strong convictions. O now the power of the Lord takes hold of the heart; and conviction is born in upon the Soul, that it stoops under it. Thus *Ephraim* as a bullock unaccustomed to the

Jer. 31. 19, 20. *yoke; I was ashamed, yea confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. O what strong convictions are here! and what now doth poor Ephraim do? He mourns and prays, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.*

5. Morning Seekers are importunate Seekers, their oppositions are greater and stronger than others; oppositions within and without. Now where there is a principle of Grace, when under opposition, it will seek so much the more importunately after *Christ*. The Disciples discouraged the poor woman of *Canaan*, saying, *Send her*

her away; a great discouragement, but she cryed the more: Opposition meeting with Grace doth but prove like cold water upon good coales, make them burn the brighter. Usually at thy first looking out after *Christ*, opposition will meet thee; but then let such opposition send you to *Christ*.

2. *Reason*, why morning Seekers shall be certain finders, because they are diligent Seekers, and the Promise runs unto diligent seeking; *He that comes unto God, must believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of such as diligently seek him.* Heb. 11.6. It is not the slothful Seeker that shall be the certain finder; no, no, the desire of the slug-gard kills him.

1. Morning Seekers are diligent Seekers, now they see the worth of what they seek, none can seek diligently but such. O now they seek the Lord Jesus in the sense of the worth of him. When we know the worth of that we seek, we will seek diligently. Ask these Seekers what *Christ* is worth, and they will tell you ten thousand worlds; he is the pearl of price.

price, chiefest of ten thousands.

2. Morning Seekers are diligent seekers, because now they are convinced of the worth of their Souls, for the good of which they seek. Persons will never seek diligently, until they come to see the preciousness of their immortal souls. Can a man be too diligent in the business of his Soul? Did ever you hear of any repented them of their diligence in working out of their salvation with fear and trembling when they came to die? Have you ever known any who have cryed out, what a fool was I, to pray so much, to live so holily, to take up so much of my time about my immortal soul? Ask a poor Soul, why it is so diligent at first seeking *Christ*, and it will tell you, I never saw the worth of my Soul before, I am now seeking out for my Soul, and if I do not find, I am a lost, undone Soul to all Eternity.

Eccl. 12. 1.

3. Morning Seekers are diligent Seekers, because they now know the evil dayes are coming upon them, in which they will be unfit to seek him; dayes of sickness, dayes of affliction, it may

may be, temptations and tryals; they seek while it is to day, because when night comes, there will be no seeking.

4. They know there is a day in which he will not be found, *Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is nigh.* O sayes the morning Seeker, the time is coming when it will be too late, the gate of Mercy will be shut, the bridge of Mercy drawn, and the Soul is afraid of delaying, and dallying upon that account.

5. Morning Seekers are diligent Seekers, because they are convinced now of the great need of *Christ*. O now they see, and say they are undone and lost for ever, if they miss of the Lord Jesus. What makes persons diligent in seeking but when they see a need of what they seek? Do not they need a *Christ*, that see they are undone to all Eternity if they have not a *Christ*?

3. *Reason*, why morning Seekers will be certain finders; the Promise runs to them: what plainer than this word in my Text, *They shall find me,*
F They

They that seek shall find. He never said to the Seed of *Jacob*, seek ye my face in vain. And he is faithful that hath promised. Let this encourage you, that you are under a Promise.

Application.

Is it so that morning Seekers shall be sure and certain finders? Then it is a word of *Inquiry* ;

Why, or what should be the reason so many poor morning Seekers are complaining they find not him whom their Souls love? as the Spouse did, *I sought him, but I found him not.* And so many poor Souls are complaining, *I sought Christ* so long, but I know not that I have found him to this day.

1. *Reason*, why *Jesus Christ* is not at present found of morning Seekers, he will exercise their Graces by it; he had a design upon the Spouse to exercise her Grace, by withdrawing from her.

1. *Says Christ*, I will try whether this poor Soul love me or no; Love is a waiting Grace; whether this poor Soul

Soul can wait, and enquire; *Saw you him whom my Soul loves?*

2. *Christ* by this tryes their faith; faith will continue seeking, though at present it doth not find. *I wait upon the Lord who hides his face from the house of Jacob.* Isa. 8. 17;

2. The Lord Jesus is not found at present of morning Seekers, to draw out their Souls in longings after him. The more a poor seeker of *Christ* seems to be denied, the more is his Soul enflamed with ardent desires. Thus did *Christ* with the Spouse when he had withdrawn himself; the watchmen smote her, took away her veil from her: Yet her Spirit was raised the more after *Christ* to enquire after him. Thus often it is with morning Seekers after *Christ*.

3. The Lord Jesus is not at present found of morning Seekers, because he will let the Soul see it is only his free Grace that must be adored and admired in finding *Christ*. Morning Seekers would be sacrificing else to their nets, and dosing incense to their own drags, and stroaking self upon the

head, and saying, this is my praying, this is my mourning, this is my being early up in the morning. O now he will have the Soul know, that it is of the riches of his Grace, that he is found of those that seek him.

4. *Jesus Christ* is not found at present of morning Seekers, because he will try whether their hearts be upright with himself. Many poor Souls begin to seek *Christ*, but it is but for a time, temporary seekers, and afterwards they are offended with one thing or other, then they draw back; that is a note of a rotten heart. I dare say thou wert never right at heart *Christ*-ward that turnest off, and lookest back, upon some offence taken against *Christ*. I doubt there be many hypocritical Seekers; it is no wonder if such be not finders.

5. *Jesus Christ* is not at present found of morning Seekers, because they are many times too legal in their seeking him; I mean, they seek him too much in a way of works, as *Israel* of old did. Now he would acquaint poor Souls with the way of faith, to
seek

seek him in a way of believing; this is the only way of seeking *Christ*.

2. Word of *Inquiry*.

If that morning Seekers shall be certain finders of *Christ*, then how comes it to pass, that so many of them after a while give over, turn their backs on the way of God, and apostatize from that they once profest? O how many young ones who have begun in the Spirit, and yet have ended in the flesh, as we might judge!

1. Many young Seekers have turned off from seeking *Christ*, because they were never truly humbled for sin. In their first seeking him, some transient convictions it may be they had, but never truly humbled for sin. O young ones look to this, or else all your affections and desires will come to nothing; you will see no worth in *Christ*, no need of *Christ*, if you be not truly humbled for sin. We read Mat. 13. 5, of that ground that had no root, and 6. what became of it? it withered. That house that digged not deep to lay the foundation, what became of it? it fell, Luk. 6. ult. and great was the fall of it.

2. Many young Seekers go off from seeking *Christ*, because they never see any real worth and excellency in *Christ*. They have had it may be some flashes of affection, but they never see *Christ* to be distinctly precious to their poor Souls. Have you ever seen him to be the pearl of price, the chiefest of ten thousand? Can such sculs, who have fallen really in love with *Christ* fall off again? Did thou ever see *Christ* a spiritual *Christ*? It may be thou hast lookt upon him as a carnal *Christ*, and hast known him, as the Apostle saith, *after the flesh*; made only a notional *Christ* of him, or an historical *Christ* of him; O then it is no wonder if thou fall off from seeking of him.

3. Many morning Seekers turn off from seeking *Christ*, because profession grows too hot for them, because of the heat of the day. O it is fine travelling in the morning, but after a while, the Sun gets up, and then it is with them, as with that ground which by and by was offended when persecution arose. Travellers take in, in the heat of the day; so I doubt do many
poor

poor young ones, that have set fairly out after *Christ*.

4. Many poor young Seekers fall off from *Christ*, because they never truly and really closed with him. Alas! it is not your seeking *Christ*, but your closing in with *Christ*, will preserve you from falling off. Have you chosen the Lord Jesus, and received him? Closing with him, is called, receiving of him, *to as many as received him*. A poor Soul may be a seeker of *Christ*, that is not a receiver of *Christ*. Job. 1. 12.

5. Many morning Seekers of *Christ* fall off again, because they come after *Christ* with some reserve. If you will be thus seekers of *Christ*, you shall fall off at one time or other, (*viz.*) I mean, if you will reserve any lust. Thus the young man came on to some terms with *Christ*, but the market soon fell, when he was told, he must sell all; and Judas followed *Christ* with a reserve; usually reserves are sinners ruine: *Turn from all iniquity* (said the Prophet) *lest it be your ruine*.

6. Many morning Seekers fall off again, because they seek him for themselves,

Hos. 10. 1.

Mr. Rushford.

selves, and not for himself; and many do thus, that are not aware of it: this is but to bring forth fruit to your selves (as *Ephraim* is charged with.) Do you see any loveliness in *Christ*, any comeliness in him? Is he a plant of Renown to you? Many seek him for loaves, though in a more refined sence than there spoken of, for his comforts, for his discoveries of love, for his smiles, *I am more taken* (sayes one) *with my Lords manifested love, than with himself.* This is to love him for what comes from him; for his tokens.

7. Many morning Seekers fall off again, because they let other lovers in process of time steal away their hearts. Many in the dayes of their youth have sought after *Christ*, but after a while the heart hath been strangely and insensibly gone, affections lost, *Christ* not in all his thoughts, why, what is the matter? The world it may be hath won in upon the soul, or gaming, or some other sin; and now the Soul falls off, as new suiters come on. O poor young ones, you will have many suiters, many will court you,

you, and then you will be in danger.

3. The next word of *Inquiry*;

If that morning Seekers shall be sure finders, how comes it to pass, the Lord Jesus hath so few Seekers? One would think *Jesus Christ* would be thronged after; as in the dayes when he was in the flesh, they thronged about the door where he was. Alas! poor Souls, you may throng about Ordinances, and Meetings, and yet never come near *Christ*. We read of a whole crowd about *Christ*, and yet but one poor Woman touched him to draw vertue from him. You may crowd about *Christ* in an Ordinance, and yet draw not one drop of vertue from him.

1. Hindrance to young ones seeking *Christ*, they are not convinced of the misery of their distant state from *Christ*; if young ones or old ones were convinced of this, if all were convinced throughly of their misery of lying out from *Christ*, O what crying, what mourning, what running, nay, what roaring after *Christ* would there be? One poor young man would
run

run up and down, crying, none but *Christ*, none but *Christ*. Another would run to every Ordinance, enquiring (with the Spouse) saw you him whom my Soul loves? And another would run to a poor Minister with this cry, Sir, I am an undone soul, if there were no more souls in the world, if a *Christ* be not my portion. Another would cry, what shall I do to be saved? Methinks I see how the stung *Israelites* run up and down when the fiery Serpents had stung them, crying, O where, where is the brazen Serpent, that I may get a look at him and be healed? So would poor Souls convinced of their misery do.

I. Poor Soul, that lies in thy distance from *Christ*, did thou ever see thy misery?

First, Thy misery of guilt, as thou art an unpardoned Soul. Is not guilt a miserable thing to lie upon a poor Creatures conscience? Ask the Devils and they will tell thee, if guilt be not an intolerable burden: Ask the damned spirits, and they will preach to thee, the misery of unpardoned guilt.

guilt. Nay, if thou could talk with a despairing Soul, O what terrible things would it tell thee, of the misery of unpardoned guilt ! O poor young man, hast thou found out the way to a pardon and leave out *Christ* ? Angels could never find out such a way. Or dost thou think to carry guilt into Glory with thee ? Must any be saved, but such as God hath pardoned ? If thou didst see the misery of guilt, thou would'st be a Seeker, and a morning Seeker after *Christ* ? All pardons are purchased and drawn up and preached in his name : They are purchased ; we have redemption, and remission of sin ; but how come they in ? through his blood ; *And they preached Repentance and Remission of Sins in his Name, beginning at Jerusalem.*

2. Poor Soul, hast thou seen the misery of thy distant state, as thou art under the power of sin, as every soul is that is out of *Christ* ? And O what a sad sight is a young person in under the power of strong corruption ? Is it nothing to thee that thou art a slave to
sin,

fin, serving divers lusts and pleasures? But when was this they did so? the Apostle tells us, before the loving kindness of God their Saviour did appear. Would'st thou have power against sin? It may be thy Soul goes to thy prayers for it, to thy duties for it, to thy resolutions and purposes for it; the best way is to close with *Christ*, for there can be no power against sin that can subdue it, until closure with *Christ*. While thou art under the power of sin, it doth what it will with thee; it Kings it, and Lords it, that thou obey'st it in the lust thereof.

Secondly, Hast thou seen the misery of thy distant state, as thou art under enmity to God, and God under enmity to thee?

1. The enmity of thy side; O what a piece of misery is it, to be under the power of enmity? this is a piece of the misery of the damned, they have an inveterate enmity against God, that if such a thing were possible, they would dethrone God; like some, we read in their distress, *Curse their God, and their King, and look upward.* Is not

Tit. 3. 4. 5.

Isa. 8. 21.

not this misery indeed, to be an enemy to the God of all thy mercies, to be an enemy to him thou daily livest upon, nay, cannot live one moment without ? And such a monster art thou. I have read of one that killed her Child, while it smiled; so would'st thou do. Art not thou spurning Gods tender bowels every day ? but now by seeking *Christ*, or closing with *Christ* this enmity is done away.

2. Enmities on Gods side ; God an enemy to thee, and can there be greater misery than this ? what, he thy enemy, that thou art every day provoking, and can upon every provocation, in a moment turn thee into Hell ? Every one fears having great ones for their enemies, but what sayst thou to the great God, who is thine enemy ? If ever poor sinners were convinced of this, O what seeking *Christ* would there be for reconciliation ?

3. Hast thou seen the misery of thy distant state, as thou art a vassal to Satan, for so is every one out of *Christ* ; and is this nothing to thee ? Wert thou in *Algier*, what Letters wouldst thou send

to thy friends! setting forth thy dolefull slavery to affect their hearts, to send over thy redemption-money? But alas! what is a Turk to the Devil? the one reaches the Body, the other the Soul. Poor Soul out of *Christ*, the Devil is thy patron, and wilt not thou groan to be delivered? Why are not Souls morning Seekers after *Christ*? Alas! they see not the misery of being under the power of Satan. Now want of powerful convictions in these three things while you lye in a distant state from *Christ*, is the first cause why he hath so few Seekers.

2. Hinderance to young Seekers after *Christ*, is, their beloved lusts, and darling corruptions: they are willing to part with some, but not all their lusts; there is an *Isaac*, that causes laughter, they cannot think of cutting the throat of it; there is a *Benjamin*, they cannot tell how to let that go; there is a *Dalilah* they are loth to lose; there is an *Herodias* they cannot endure to part with; a right hand they will needs keep, and hide. O no, poor young man, thou must sell all,

all, if thou wilt seek and find this pearl of price. We read of the young man, and he was very fair and like to fall in with *Christ*; *Jesus Christ* begins to strike at his right hand, and he pulls it in, and *Christ* and he parts upon this occasion. *Herod* was fair, but when *John* gets a blow at his *Herodias*, *Herod* gets a blow at *Johns* head, and strikes it off. O poor sinner, if thou resolve for *Christ*, thou must resolve against thy darling sin.

Mark 10:
22.

3. Hinderance to young Seekers after *Christ*, is, their entanglement by wicked company. They come to Ordinances, and are convinced, that sin will be bitter to them in the latter end; and they see no way but that living and dying in such courses they are lost for ever. Well, one would think some good would spring and grow out of such convictions; but alas! the next time they come in their evil company, they have absolutely lost all; one would not think these were the young men that were so affected at Sermons: Now it may be, you may see in their hands instead of their

their Bibles, their Cups; and in their mouths hear instead of their prayers, their oaths. Well, young men, know for all this God will bring you into judgement.

1. Wilt thou poor Soul rather part with a precious *Christ*, than with thy base company? O unworthy Soul of *Christ's* bowels! to prefer thy sinful Companions before thy Blessed Jesus; as those poor Souls preferred *Barabbas* before Jesus. What wilt thou love a drunkard, a swearer, an unclean wanton before *Jesus Christ*?

2. Wilt thou rather part with an immortal precious Soul, than part with thy wicked company? O how many have been damned by this one sin! how many thousands of Souls have been cast away for ever upon this rock! while other sins have slain their thousands, this hath slain ten thousands. O how many company-keepers are now in Hell!

3. Then canst thou look upon them when thou comest to dye, and thy conscience filled with guilt and horror? canst thou then look upon them
with

with delight? Canst thou sport thy self with thinking or discoursing how many times you have been drunk together, how many times you have violated the Lords day together, how many nights you have spent all gaming together? If your Companions should come in, when you are upon a death bed, and say, Come be of good cheer, remember such a bout, and such a bout, how merry we were. O will not this be as a dagger to stab through your heart, will not this wound like a sword in the bones? Remember the young mans doleful ditty in the *Proverbs*; and thou mourn at last when thy flesh and thy body is consumed, and say, *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?* Prov. 3.
11, 12, 13.

4. Will not your wicked examples one to another here, be aggravations of one anothers torments in another world?

5. Poor Souls, if you will go to Hell for company, you shall have company enough there. What company is there there? There is the Devils com-

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pany,

pany, and wicked Spirits company. As blessed Doctor *Preston* said in a good sence, so here may be said in a sad sence, *I shall change my place, but not my company*: So thou mayest say, thou must change Earth for Hell, but not thy company, there is wicked company enough there.

4. Fourth hinderance to young Seekers after *Christ* is a spirit of slothfulness; they indulge themselves too much in their own ease, as the Spouse did, but this provoked *Christ*, and he did withdraw upon it. Poor Sinner, what man that hath been industrious, that by pains and care hath gotten an estate, afterwards repents himself, but rather looks back upon his diligence with delight? So, did you ever hear of any when they were to dye, that ever cryed out, O that I had not spent so many dayes in the service of God! O that I had never taken such pains in seeking after *Christ*! But you have heard of many on the contrary, that have cryed, O that I were to live over my dayes and time again! would I ever be so careless of an immortal

mortal Soul? would I ever indulge my carnal sloth at that rate I have done? would I miss so many precious seasons of Grace for my Soul as I have done?

1. Poor Soul, do not many strive and never win into the harbour? had not thou need cast off thy sloth then?

2. *Work out thy salvation with fear and trembling*; who then would give way to flesh?

3. It is a business of eternal consequence, who would be slothful in a business of such great concernment?

4. All our diligence is little enough; therefore God calls for violence in the case, to take heaven by violence, this is honourable.

5. The fruit of diligence will be peace upon a death bed. *Be diligent* 2 Pet. 3. 14. is *Peters* exhortation; but what motive doth he use? *That you may be found of him in peace.*

5. Fifth hinderance to young Seekers after *Christ* is hope of a longer lease of their lives, they hope there is no such hast: Some years hence, when they have gotten an estate in the

G 2 world,

world, then they will look after these things; but why should they be so early with *Christ*? will not two seven years hence serve? and thus they delay their seeking after *Christ*.

1. It is worth considering; what if thou do live longer and be hardened in sin? While Plants are tender they may be dealt with, but when they are grown, they are too sturdy. Alas poor Sinner! thou mayst be hereafter a sturdy sinner, an hardened sinner, an Atheist, a Scoffer, a Persecutor, what if God shall give thee up after thou hast refused to hearken unto him, and say of thee, as of *Israel* of old, *But Israel would have none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts lusts.*

Psal. 81.
11, 12.

2. Is it not worth considering, whether the motions of the Spirit be not irrecoverably forfeited by such Souls as delay seeking after *Christ* upon hope of a longer day. There have been Souls that have irrecoverably forfeited the Spirits gales; and then what a sad condition would thy poor Soul be in? God hath said, his Spirit shall not alwayes strive with man.

3. What

3. What if while thou art hoping for a longer day, God should send thee a summons, by the black Serjeant Death, to tell thee, this night shall thy Soul be taken away? It was so with him, while he was saying, *Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years.*

4. What if thy day of Grace should be over, and *Christ* wooe no more, tender himself no more, but his abused love turn into incensed wrath?

5. Consider, how thy puts off, and delayes have grieved *Christ*. Hast not thou wearied out the Lord Jesus, while he hath stretched his arm all the day long?

6. Consider, how your delays will sting you upon a death bed, or in another world. O how often was I called, and yet delayed! The remembrance of every delay, will go to your hearts like a dagger, and bleed in your conscience for ever.

6. Sixth Hinderance to morning Seekers after *Jesus Christ*, is, perswasions of *Christs* unwillingness to receive them, or be found of them, because of their

G 3 unworthiness.

unworthiness. This very case discourages many a poor Soul from seeking after *Christ*; they have taken in hard thoughts of *God* and *Christ*. And O how doth Satan now haunt the Soul, taking all opportunities to blow up their unbelieving jealousies against *Christ*.

1. Poor Soul, would *Jesus Christ* wooe thee, if he were not willing to be found of thee? Would he knock, if he were not willing to come in upon thy opening? Would he hold out his Golden Scepter for thee to kiss, if he were not willing to be reconciled to thee?

2. Poor Soul, would he wait if he were not willing? What speaks his great patience and long suffering towards thee, but his willingness to be found of thee? Why doth he not only knock, but stand and knock; *Behold,* Rev. 3. 20. *I stand at the door and knock: He is not yet gone from your doors, which notes his willingness to be in.*

3. Poor Soul, would he complain of poor Sinners unwillingness to receive him, if he were not willing? If it stick
not

not on the sinners side, there then is no ground for complaining on *Christs* side. O the sad complaints and groans that have proceeded from *Christ* upon this account! *You will not come unto me, that ye might have life. He was grieved because of their unbelief, and hardness of their hearts.*

4. Poor Soul, would the *Lord Jesus Christ* send his voice behind thee, so often prompting thee on to seek after *Christ*, if he were not willing? O how doth the voice still keep behind thee, in Ordinances, in Afflictions whispering to thee thy duty? We read of the Spirit, saying, *Come*, as well as the Bride saying *Come*; it is the Spirit of God is the great maker up of the match, betwixt the Soul and *Christ*; and this argues *Christ* is willing, because he sends his messenger so often to thee upon the errand.

5. Poor Soul, would the *Lord Jesus Christ* have been so willing to come a Salvation-errand into the world, if he were not willing to be found of Sinners? What was *Christs* errand from Heaven unto Earth? He came

to seek Souls, to seek and to save that which was lost ; *He came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to repentance.* Would he seek you, if not willing to save you ? O let not *Christ* lose his pains, by your harbouring unbelieving jealousies of his love !

7. Seventh hinderance to morning Seekers after *Jesus Christ*, is, they hope they may repent upon a death bed, or sick bed, after they have spent their youthful time in sin and vanity ; this is very incident to all, but especially to young persons.

1. Poor Soul, what if the grim Serjeant Death serve a Writ on thee unawares ? If thou be struck on a sudden where then will be thy repentance ? Dost thou know the manner of thy death, any more than the time of death ? What if thou poor young man, who hast slighted so many warnings, shouldst have none given thee when the great stroak comes ? What if the Lord come upon thee in an hour thou lookedst not for him.

2. What if thou be given up to a feared conscience, on a sick bed, or death

death bed? A seared conscience at any time is sad, but most sad on a sick bed; have not many died seared and hardened in sin, yea in their very youth? But as they lived so they died, without sense or feeling of their sad and sinful state.

3. Poor Souls, what if your repentance then will not go with God? I think sinners, you may well have such *jealousies*, that your repentance is hypocritical, while it is thus forced and extorted from you, by reason of your fears and horrors that now walk in your consciences. There is a great deal of counterfeit repentance that God will not take when you come to die; late repentance is seldome true: and is it not a pitty (as one observes) to play the Courtiers with your own Souls? They do all things late, they go to bed late, and rise late, and dine late, and sup late, and worst of all, repent late.

4. What if thy poor Conscience should now cry, it is too late, thou shouldst have done it sooner? Many have thus cryed out, O no there is no mercy

mercy for them, they have stood it out too long, and now they cannot expect any thing at Gods hand, but a righteous sentence of separation for ever from his comfortable face.

5. Poor Soul, how will it sting thee to consider thou might often have done it in a fitter time, when thou put it off. Is not a time of health the fittest time for repentance? O now how will the consideration of thy many calls, and many refusals lie heavy upon thee!

8. Eighth hinderance to poor morning Seekers against *Christ*, is the prejudice that Satan labours to fill their Souls with against *Christ*; this is very incident to young persons, to take up prejudices against the *Lord Jesus Christ*.

1. Satan labours to prejudice them by the paucity and fewness of those that seek after *Christ*; they are but a few, and why should you go from the way the multitude walks in? O poor Sinner, would you be pleased to consider it is *Christs* own Doctrine, *There be few that shall be saved*; why should then this be a stumbling block unto you? Have you a mind to go to Hell for

for company? Many are the travellers that go hells beaten road, *broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be that find it.*

2. Satan prejudices many times young ones by the meanness and contemptibleness of those that are Seekers of the *Lord Jesus Christ*. This people that know not the Law are accursed; few of the Rulers believed on him; not many wise Nobles, &c. The Poor receive the Gospel. O poor Souls, know they are most honourable that are so in the account of God, and not of man. *Since thou wert precious in my sight, thou wert honourable: The Righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.* They that honour God, God will honour. Isa. 43. 4.

3. Satan labours to fill Souls with prejudice against *Christ*, by presenting them with the difficulties they shall meet withal. It is true, you may meet with discouragement in the way, but you shall have the breaker up go before you, and he will make the way easie, and crooked wayes streight, and rough wayes shall become plain.

4. Satan

4. Satan labours to fill Souls with prejudice against *Christ* from the manifold infirmities that attend his followers ; and indeed this is a great objection, that all Seekers after *Christ* do not walk so closely as they ought. Well poor Soul, know, the wayes of God are the same, and *Jesus Christ* is the same, though it is sad there should be so much ground for this stumbling block lying in your way.

5. Satan labours to fill them with prejudice against *Christ*, from the Cross that attends them; and the Cross of *Christ* hath been a Rock of offence to many poor Souls. Well but poor Soul, there is a Crown annexed to the Cross, they that suffer with him shall reign with him. Unto you I appoint a Kingdom ; who were they ? Such as continued with him in great temptations.

The next Use. If morning Seekers be sure and infallible finders, then it is a word of *Cauti*on.

First, Take heed of giving over, of being too short breathed in seeking of *Christ* ; He that believes makes not
hast.

haft. To set on this Caution which is of great concernment to every poor Soul that hath set out to seek *Christ*, although it was hinted the last Observation, I will enlarge it now.

1. If you give over, your hearts were never truly in good earnest in the work. It may be you had some flashes of affection, or some gripes and pangs of conviction, that for the present startled you, but yet your hearts were not truly in good earnest in the work. Ah poor Soul, that truly sees its need of *Christ*, the real worth and excellency that is in him, its real misery without him, this Soul will never give over untill it hath found him, *whom its Soul loveth*. Is that love in good earnest, that because it meets discouragements, gives over the pursuit of the object? The Spouse was in good earnest, therefore gives not over, but still keeps up her enquiries after *Christ*, *Saw you him whom my Soul loveth*.

2. If you give over you lose the prize; if the racers give over they lose; therefore we have that Caution, *So*

1 Cor. 9.
24.

run

run as you may obtain. Is not this sad to be runners and losers, seekers and missers at last? Poor Souls, if you give over you will go without; *He that continues to the end, the same shall be saved.* We are to run with patience the Race set before us; to run it, and not give over.

3. If you give over, and so sit down short of *Christ*, it will aggravate your guilt and condemnation. What, you that once were so forward in the ways of God; what, you that once gave such good hopes you were truly in love with *Jesus Christ*; what, you that were once praying young men and women, and nigh the Kingdom, as that Scribe we read of in the Gospel, and to give over? O how will this aggravate your miscarriage! and you your selves shut out, this aggravates all.

Luke 13.
26.

4. If you give over seeking, you will fall either into persecution or profaneness; usually this is the end of such. When young men, while they have been Apprentices, and under convictions, they have sought *Christ*, but afterwards

afterwards fall off again, they ordinarily prove, either Persecutors of the wayes of God, or else Profane; this is in judgement upon them. God suffers them to fall into these things, punishing sin with sin; and very sad hath been the end of such. Would you ever think this hopeful praying young man would prove a drunkard, a swearer, a prodigal? If you give over seeking *Christ*, this I doubt will be your end.

5. If you give over seeking *Christ*, this will be a great discouragement to others; you weaken the hands of others; they will be afraid when they see you so sadly drawn back, that they should do so too; you hinder others seeking after *Christ*.

6. If you give over seeking *Christ*, you cloath your Ministers with shame; and is this the love you have formerly profest to them? O how once you were endeared to those spiritual Fathers! How could you have pulled out your very eyes for them, when they were first instrumental to do your souls good; and is this your kindness unto them, to put them unto shame?

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Disappointments bring shame ; *Make me not ashamed of my hope*, sayes David. O many Ministers had hopes of you, and prayed for you, and have hoped you would be their *Crown* and *Rejoycing* (as *Paul* said) and what now prove their shame ? O how near this will go to the hearts of Godly Ministers ! Have not they said of you, as *Paul* said of them, *We live, if you stand fast in the Lord*.

Secondly, If morning Seekers be sure and infallible finders, then take heed of a discouraged frame of heart in seeking *Christ* ; this is Satans work, to discourage poor Souls, to lay stumbling blocks in their way, and tell them there is no hope, no ; *Christ* will never be found of such as they are, *hope is perished from the Lord*. O take heed I say of this frame of heart ; you know what they said to the poor blind man, *Be of good cheer, the Lord calleth thee* : So do I say unto you poor morning Seekers, be not discouraged, the Lord will be found of you.

1. A discouraged frame of heart will open a door to hard thoughts of God.

God. Usually discouraged Souls are jealous and suspicious Souls of God ; and alas ! this will weaken you exceedingly in your seeking after *Christ*. O what a hard thought was that, *My God hath forgotten, my God hath forsaken.*

2. A discouraged frame of heart grieves the Spirit of God ; what, seek *Christ* with a discouraged frame of heart ? can this be pleasing to the Spirit of God , who is the Comforter ?

3. A discouraged frame of heart opens a door to consult with Satan, he loves to be fishing in troubled waters, and ordinarily he sits by discouraged Souls, helping them to conclude against *Christ* and their own Souls ; it is a very dangerous thing to be drawn in to consult with Satan.

4. A discouraged frame of heart will weaken your endeavours in your pursuits after *Christ* ; the joy of the Lord is a believers strength, but discouragements weaken exceedingly.

5. A discouraged frame of heart in seeking *Christ*, reflects upon *Christ*, as though he were unwilling to be found

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of

of poor sinners : This is dishonourable to *Christ*, dishonourable to his design of coming into the world ; was it not to save Sinners ? dishonourable to his Promises ; hath not he promised, *He will not break the bruised Reed, nor quench the smoking Flax ?*

Thirdly, If morning Seekers shall be sure and certain finders, then take heed of delaying to seek the Lord Jesus ; do not put off *Christ* ; take heed of this, because that you are young, and hope you have time before you. O this many times is a Rock that splits thousands of Souls ; they say they will seek *Christ* at a more convenient time.

1. Take heed of losing your morning, for the present time is only yours. Alas poor Soul ! if thou layest not hold of the fore-lock of thy present time, thou mayest be undone for ever. O how the Lord calls on us to improve our present time ; Work while it is to day, and if you will hearken to his voice, while it is to day ; walk in the light, while you have the light ; now is the acceptable time.

2. Take heed of losing your morning

ing. You young ones, you know not how short your morning may be; and when mornings are short, persons had need be up and doing. How many young ones have been cut off in their morning, in the prime of their time, in the flower of their youth, gone to the Grave in a moment, while the milk was in their breasts, and marrow in their bones?

3. Take heed you lose not your morning; it will be harder work to seek *Christ* afterwards, when you have delayed time after time: after you have lost the forenoon of your lives, it will be hard redeeming the afternoon. O how rare a thing is it to see a person wrought on in their afternoon? not but some have been met with; but this is not so ordinary.

1. The more guilt there is upon the Soul, the harder it will be to seek out after *Christ*; the longer thou delayest, the more guilt thou contractest upon thy Soul. O what complaints have such Souls uttered. O that I had come to *Christ* sooner! but will he now receive me to mercy, who have stood

out so long? Had I fallen in with *Christ* upon his first offers, and tenders, it had been more easie to have thought he would have accepted me. And thou wilt find this a strong objection upon thee; the heavier load of guilt upon thy Soul, the heavier thou wilt find it to draw to *Jesus Christ*.

2. It will be harder for you to seek after *Christ*, after you have delayed, because the sense of your unkindness to *Christ* will fill your Souls when you are awakened. What, stand out against *Christ*, after so many knocks, after so many calls, after so many offers, and invitations? Thus it was with the Spouse when she arose to open to her Beloved, there was a little myrrhe left upon the handles of the lock, and then her bowels were moved, (*viz.*) She was filled with shame and sorrow that she should use *Christ* so unkindly.

3. The more a Spirit of sloth takes possession on the Soul, the harder it is to shake off.

4. Take heed of losing your morning, for a dark night is fast approaching upon you, in which you cannot seek

seek *Christ*, in which you cannot work ; it is bad seeking any thing in the dark. I may say unto you as the Prophet to them, *Give Glory to God before he cause darknes, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountain.* This is the Doctrine that our Lord *Jesus Christ* preacht himself; *Work while it is to day, for night comes when no man can work.* Jer. 13. 16.

1. Poor Souls, what if a night of judicial darknes, and blindnes come upon you? What if God give you over to a dark heart? He suffered some we read of to walk in the wayes of their own heart.

2. What if a night of temptation come upon you? It is ill seeking *Christ* under temptation.

3. What if a night of death come upon thee, then thy seeking *Christ* is at end; there is no work in the grave where thou goest. What though young men, you be now in your morning, God can cause your Sun to set at noon-day, and bring a night upon you before you are aware; therefore lose not your morning.

H 3

5. Take

5. Take heed you lose not your morning ; your morning discoveries and manifestations will be your evening supports and consolations ; the evening of our lives is our declining time, our old age. And O what a mercy is this, to be laid in with comfort when that comes ! What a sad thing is that, to see one gray-headed, and forsaken of God ? As *David* prayed, many have cause to pray, *forsake me not when I am gray-headed*. If you seek him in your youth, he will sit by you when you are old. O that is a sad Text, *and the sinner an hundred years old shall be accursed*. O but there are many gracious Souls that have sought him while they were young, that comfort themselves with his loving kindness of old, that remember the sweet love-stories, and passages betwixt *Christ* and their poor Soul, and at last go off the stage of this life triumphing. To see an old Christian go comfortably to heaven, leaning over the staff of the Promise, and telling of nothing but his youth experiences of *Christ*, O what a sight is this ! And on the other side,

to

to see an old man, who hath nothing to remember, but what a drunken wretch he hath been, what a wicked company-keeper he hath been, what an unclean filthy wretch he hath been, what an oppressor of other men he hath been; and such stories he can tell you all day: O what a dreadful thing is this!

6. Take heed you lose not your morning; when God doth awaken you, and get you out of your bed of sin and sloth, it will grieve, and cut you to the very heart, that you got up no sooner, that you have lost so much time already. O how many Souls have been deeply wounded with the sense of their lost time? O what complaints have such Souls groaned out, That I should be so long in the service of sin and Satan, O that I should spend so many years in gratifying the lusts of the flesh, in making provision for the flesh, and all that while put a slight upon the *Lord Jesus Christ*, as not being worth seeking.

4. *Caution*, If morning Seekers shall be sure and certain finders of *Christ*,

H 4

then

then let them take heed of hasty and rash concluding against *Christ* and their own Souls ; this is an infirmity that young Seekers are mightily prone to in their first convictions. O sure *Jesus Christ* will not be found of such poor sinful, vile Creatures as we are : we have been such *Ephraims*, such *Bullocks* unaccustomed to the yoke, such *Sons of Belial*, so stubborn even from our youth up, we cannot think he would be found of us, though we should seek him.

1. *First*, O poor Soul, do you think *Christ* doth not matter his word ? If under your temptations you should think he does not matter your Soul, yet think he matters his word. Cannot you say, remember the Word, Lord, upon which thou causest me to hope. Do you think *Christ* is indifferent, whether his Promises be accomplished or no ? No, no, not one Jota of his Promise shall fail. You may be discouraged, but the Promise is in reference to bruised reeds and smoking flax. It is said, *He shall not be discouraged, nor fail ; you may, but he shall not.*

He. 42. 4.

2. Se-

2. *Secondly*, why, Souls, should you think he will not accept of you, are not your names in his Commission? He was sent to seek and save such as are lost; and are not you lost Souls? Lost in your selves, lost prodigals. This my Son was lost: and do you think he will not then accept of you?

3. *Thirdly*, why think you so hardly of *Christ*, doth not *Christ* call such? *He came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* Be of good cheer poor Soul; the Lord calls on thee, as was said to the poor blind man. But something of this nature will fall in upon another use; therefore I will forbear now.

5. Branch of the *Caution*; then let morning Seekers take heed they do not sit down short of *Christ*. Why, if he will be found of us, should we sit down short of him? As it is said in that case, so may I say in this; a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest, let us not seem to rest short of it. There are many things morning Seekers are prone to rest in on this side *Christ*. You may take up in your common

mon convictions, in your constitutional affections, in your acquired gifts and parts, in your restraining grace, in a form of profession, and so miss of *Christ* for ever.

1. *First*, take heed of resting short of *Christ*, many thousands have done so. We read of the Scribe that answered *Christ* discreetly, and Jesus said unto him, *Thou art nigh unto the Kingdom of God* : But alas, he was short of *Christ* for all this. And also the young man in the Gospel rested short of *Christ* ; and also the foolish Virgins, and the Children of the Kingdom we read of came short of *Christ*.

2. *Secondly*, take heed morning Seekers you do not rest short of *Christ* ; this will aggravate your misery exceedingly in missing of him. What, you that were within a little of *Christ* miss him ! What, you that were in so fair a way for *Christ*, you who set out so hopefully in the morning of your day ! O for poor Souls in Hell, to sing such doleful ditties, I was once convinced of my sin, and I was once convinced of my misery without *Christ*, and I
was

was once convinced of the excellency of *Christ*; But O my corruptions were too strong for my convictions! and so my poor Soul sat short of the *Lord Jesus Christ*. To miscarry within a little of harbour, within sight of land; O what a cutting aggravation is this to poor Seamen, when almost at their Port? So many Souls have done, they have been almost perswaded to become Christians, yet they have rested short of *Christ*.

3. *Thirdly*, take heed, morning Seekers, that you rest not short of *Christ*. Satan, if it be possible, will keep you short of *Christ*: this is Satans design, if he can but perswade the Soul to take up in something on this side *Christ*, in some notion, some opinion. Hence it is, as soon as young people come under any convictions of sin, and when any good Seed is sown in the Soul, then comes Satan with his Tares. Then they get, it may be, some notion or opinion whereby Satan does divert them, and hinder them from closing with *Christ*: And when they are gotten hither, here they rest.

Thou-

Thousands have been eternally undone this way.

3. *Use.* Is it so, that morning Seekers shall be sure and certain finders of the *Lord Jesus Christ*? then it is an *Use* of

Exhortation

To set upon the duty, and work in good earnest, to loyter no more of your morning away, to trifle no more of your precious time away: but that you may have the comfort of the Promise, O that you may be found in obedience to the precept; if you would find, you must seek. O poor Souls, do not you hear him Call? Call upon him while he is near, seek him while he is to be found. What, is not the Lord Jesus worth seeking? he is then worth nothing.

1. *Motive* to seek the Lord in your morning; now is your seeking time; seeking will not alwayes be in season. You must do things in their proper season; there is a time for every purpose, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of Salvation. Now acquaint thy self with God, and be at peace,

peace, was good counsel by *Jobs* friend. Now is thy only time to seek acquaintance with *Christ*. Poor *Sinner*, there is a time in which God will not be found; *For this shall the Godly pray unto him in a time when he will be found.*

1. There is a day coming, in which the Spirit of God will leave striving with you, and then seeking will be out of season. Can you seek, if the Spirit strive not? What is that which puts poor Sinners upon seeking of *Christ*, but the strivings and convictions of the Spirit?

2. There is a day coming wherein the things that concern your peace will be hid from your eyes. Thus God told *Jerusalem*, *But now the things that concern your Peace are hid from your eyes.* You will be judicially hardened.

3. There is a day coming, in which Gods bowels will be shut up in displeasure against you. You are hardened against God, and God against you. O that is a terrible Text, *I will not answer when you call.* What will God then

Prov. 1.
25, 26.

then do? *I will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your fear comes.*

4. There is a day coming when ordinances shall be ineffectual to you. God sayes, *Make the heart of this people fat.* O dreadful word, to have Ordinances given to harden, and not to soften!

5. There is a day coming, that death and hell shall look ghastly upon you; and will this be a seeking time? Will not *Christ* tell you, O poor Sinner, this is but a force? Now when you see no way but damnation before you, now you seek after me: this is only to serve your own ends of *Christ*. O poor Souls, be perswaded to seek *Christ* before these dayes come upon you.

2. *Motive* in the morning of your dayes to be seeking the Lord *Jesus Christ*, such Souls shall live; in him you may have life, life is only to be had in him, therefore he is called a Believers Life. He is *the Way, the Truth and the Life*; and he is called the *Living Stone*. You will not come to me that you might have life. The poor

(III)

poor Sinner is dead, while he lies at distance from *Christ*; thou mayst have gifts and parts, as dead bodies may be stuck with flowers, and strawed with herbs, but this is but dubbing the dead; all this while there is no life in the man, it is only he that hath the Son hath life.

1. *First*, They that seek *Christ* have living influences from *Christ*; he is the head, that sends living influences into all his members. O what a supply of influences is to be had from *Jesus Christ*! You must seek all you have from him; it pleased the Father that in him *should all fulness dwell*, and this as believers head. And we read of believers being called Lively Stones, active for *Jesus Christ*; not only Christians, but lively Christians. How comes this to pass? being built up in him, united to him, as the superstructure is to the foundation, the living Stone sends up living influences into all that are built upon him; therefore he is the Vine, that by his communicating influences doth keep Souls, not only living, but thriving.

2 Pet. 2.
4, 5.

2. *Se-*

2. *Secondly*, He communicates living comfort to such as seek him. That is a precious Prophecy concerning *Christ*, *The meek shall eat and be satisfied, they shall praise the Lord that seek him, your heart shall live for ever.* They shall eat by Faith the *Lord Jesus Christ* and be satisfied, (*viz.*) be comforted in their Soul. Who? The poor, meek, humble Seekers of *Christ*, in the sense of their own vileness, who have been cast down in the sense of their own unworthiness; for by the meek are meant such. What then? *They shall live for ever*; not be rejoiced and comforted for a while; for this is meant, by the heart living, it shall be revived and comforted. O but may the poor Soul say, this comfort will not last. O yes, *Their heart shall live for ever.* The like Promises we have in other places.

Psal. 22.

Gen. 4. 5.
27.Psal. 69.
33.

3. *Thirdly*, They that seek *Christ* have living Graces from him; *we receive of his fulness, Grace for Grace*; all we have must be in a way of seeking; not only Grace at the first effusion, when he sayes to the Soul *live*, but the

the lively exercises of Grace are from him. The Spicknard gives a pleasant smell, (*viz.*) the Graces of the Spirit, Faith, and Hope, and Love, and Zeal, they are all exercised ; they put forth lively acts. What is the matter ? the King is at the Table.

3. *Motive* to seek the Lord Jesus in the morning of your day ; your Rest must be found in *Christ*. O whither will not a poor burdened sin-laden Soul go for Rest ! O what will not a poor distressed Sinner do in hope to obtain Rest ! Rivers of Oyl, and thousands of Rams, if it were possible to expiate their sin : Nay, they will not stick at their first-born. What is the reason the blind Papists appoint so many Penances, so many Pilgrims, so many Fasts and Scourgings, but they hope these are expiatory ? But, alas, all this will but be seeking that they will never find. If you will have the desirable mercy of Soul Rest, you must go to him for it, *Come unto me all ye* Mat. 11. 29
that are weary and laden and you shall find rest for your Souls. The verse before sayes, *I will give it, this, you shall*
I find

Iſa. 11. 10.

find it. But might the poor Soul ſay, Lord, if we ſeek it here, ſhall not we miſs of it? No, you ſhall be ſure to find it. *To him ſhall the Gentiles ſeek;* and what then? *And his reſt ſhall be glorious.* Some Interpreters it is true take it for his Church, which is *Chriſts* Reſt, it ſhall be glorious. Others carry it, his reſt, the reſt which he ſhall give, it ſhall be glory. It ſhall be the glory of a Soul to ſeek and find reſt from him. What is it you young ones would have? is it this true ſpiritual reſt and peace? never think to have this ſhort of *Chriſt*.

4. *Motive* to ſeek the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* in the morning of your day; you know not what your evening may prove, or your mid-day may prove. What if you ſhould have an afternoon filled up with afflictions? do you know what God will fill up your day with-
all?

1. What if God ſhould fill up your day with temptations? Will it not then repent you that you ſought him not in the morning? If you ſhould be exerciſed with that one diſmal
thought,

thought, that the day of Grace is over,
O how it will grieve you that you
looked out so late after *Christ* ! O
what a wretch am I to be so much be-
hind with *Christ*, and my own Soul !
And O how many objections will such
a thought cast in thy way !

2. What if God fill up thy day with
sharp tryals, with weakness of body,
losses in thine outward estate ? Will
this be so fit a time to seek *Christ* in,
when thou wilt have enough to do to
bear up under these tryals ? O then
how will thy poor Soul wish, thou had
been laid in better for such rainy days ?
How will thy poor Soul then grieve
that thou made a friend of *Christ* no
sooner against such a day as this ?

3. What if God towards the even-
ing of thy day take away from thee
the advantages thou once had for thy
poor Soul ? It may be when thou wert
young thou livedst in some Godly Fa-
mily, which is no small advantage, as
little as young persons matter it. It
may be thou livedst amidst some god-
ly acquaintance, it may be thou liv-
edst under some powerful Soul-search-

ing Ministry, these helps may be removed from thee, or thou from them, and O then how thou wilt be grieved, that thou sought *Christ* no sooner, that now thou hast no more acquaintance with him.

4. What if God should give thee but a little warning or time to look about thee for thy Soul, if thou should die in four or five dayes time; and then review thy lost time, and look over thy life again? O how will it grieve thee that thou struck no sooner in with *Christ*! that now thou hast all thy work to do for Eternity, that might have got it down long agoe. Now thy work to do, and no time to do it in. Formerly thou hadst time, and wantedst a heart, and now thou hast a heart to it, and wantest time.

5. Seek *Christ* in the morning of your day, and you shall dye triumphing at night. You shall go gloriously off the stage of this present life. Should not we be often remembring our latter end? Is it not said of *Jerusalem*, she came wonderfully down, because she considered not her latter end?

Lam. 1. 14.

end? Is not this to be a wise Virgin?
 to get your lamps and your vessels
 stored with Oyl, that when the Bride-
 grome comes, and the midnight-cry
 calls, you may go out chearfully to
 meet him. Is not this wisdom in
 Gods Book, *O that my people were wise,* Deut. 32.
that they did consider their latter end. 29.
 And who is it that hath an abundant
 entrance into the Kingdom of God,
 but the diligent Believer and Seeker?
Add all diligence that you may be found 1 Pet 1.9.
of him in peace. 3. 14. O how many have
 died with this sad and doleful note in
 their mouths, O it is now too late.
 Had I sought *Christ* sooner, there had
 been hope; but I cannot believe he
 will accept of such a refuser of a day
 of Grace, and tenders of Grace, as I
 have been.

Lastly, O seek *Christ* in the morning
 of your day; others may be drawn to
 seek him with you, and say as they did
 to the Daughter of *Jerusalem* when
 she had sought him diligently, Tell us
 where thy Beloved is gone, that we
 may seek him with thee. Your being
 up in the morning to seek *Christ* may

draw others on, and O what mercy
 Job 23. 3. would this be?

But by this time methinks I hear some poor Soul say, O that I knew where to find him, I would come even to his seat: but alas, young travellers must have some directions, and so must young Seekers; how shall we then, say poor Souls, seek *Christ*?

1. Be sure you seek him sorrowing, as the Parents of *Christ* after the flesh sought him, *Thy Father and I sought thee sorrowing*. Sorrowing under the sense of sin. So must you seek him. True mourners are the finding Seekers.

Jer. 31. 9. O that is a sweet word, *They shall come with weepings, and with supplications will I lead them. They shall go weeping, seeking the Lord their God*. Thus Souls must go to *Christ* in a through sense of their condition. Who were they that sought to the Brazen Serpent, but they that were stung with the fiery Serpent?

2. Seek *Christ* with a high appreciation of *Christ*. Who will seek him, that doth not esteem him to be the pearl of price? But when the Merchant man had found the pearl
 of

Mat. 13.
 4.

of price, he sold all to buy it. Why did the Spouse so seek *Christ* through all difficulties? He was to her *the white and ruddy one, the chiefest of ten thousands*. We read of the happiness of the man that finds wisdom; why so? this wisdom is *Christ*, and *the merchandize thereof is better than that of Gold, &c.* Prov. 3.
13.

3. Seek *Christ* sincerely. We read of some that turned feignedly to the Lord. O take heed of seeking of him feignedly. If your hearts be not right, God will discover them. *Simon Magus* would be a Seeker, yet he was discovered, we was *in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity*.

4. Seek him perseveringly, if you would seek him so as to find him. She sought her lost groat, untill she found it. But this hath been largely insisted on before.

5. Seek the *Lord Jesus Christ* through all opposition, as the Spouse did when they took her veil from her, and the watchmen smote her; yet she gave not over.

The End of the first Sermon.



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Isaiah 55. 6.

*Seek the Lord while he may
be found, call upon him
while he is near.*



He words are the Call of *Christ* to poor Gentile Sinners. It is clear, the Prophet in the preceding verse is prophesying of *Christ*; and when he had spoke of *Christ*,
 1. Under the notion of a leader,
 2. Under the notion of a witness,
 3. Under the notion of a Saviour,
 (so is meant by calling a Nation that knew him not, and their running to him, and God glorifying him, viz. as the *Messiah*, and *Saviour* of poor Gentiles, as well as Jewes) then the Prophet

phet gives these poor Gentiles a Call, which is the words of my Text.

1. In the Text we have a Call, or Exhortation to a duty.

2. We have a Motive or Argument backing that Call.

1. The Call is, *Seek the Lord.*

2. Motive is implied in that, *while he may be found.* There is an especial season for the performance of this duty ; if let slip, your Souls will repent it to all Eternity.

Let us inquire a little, what is meant by this Call, *Seek the Lord.*

1. Here is this implied in it. This people and the Lord were strangers. This is the description of a Gentile ;
 Eph. 2. 12. *He is a stranger to the Lord, and to the Covenant of Promise.* Souls who lye far from acquaintance with God ; therefore expressed by another word, to be in the far Country : So the Prodigal was, which was the Gentile, for the elder Brother was the Jew. Now then by *seek the Lord* is meant, get into acquaintance with him. Seek acquaintance with him, as a Saviour, as a Leader. He had been spoke of under these

Luk. 15.
13.

no-

notions, and set out to them.

2. *Seek the Lord (viz.)* the willingness of the Lord to be found of poor Gentile Sinners. He would never else have given them such a Call. He first calls, he is first in the motion, *who loved us first* : the business doth not stick at Gods door, but at ours.

3. *Seek the Lord, (viz.)* accept of the offers of grace while he holds them forth to you in the Gospel. This is the great Duty called to in the Text. The Text then runs thus : There is both in time, and out of time, for your poor Souls ; there is an especial season of Grace you have ; and upon this depends the Eternal happiness and felicity of your poor Souls. Let that slip, and your Souls are undone for ever. Lay hold of this especial time, and you are happy for ever. This is the meaning of the Text, *I will not always strive with you*, will not always call on you, will not always wait with offers of pardoning grace ; therefore before I call in my Scepter, O do you seek me.

Obser-

Observations are these.

1. *The Lord Jesus is willing to be found of poor Gentile Sinners.*

2. *There are especial times of finding the Lord Jesus while he is to be found.*

3. *It is the duty of every poor Soul to observe his especial times, to seek Christ in.*

4. *There is a day and time in which Christ will not be found.*

1. The Lord Jesus is willing to be found of poor Gentile Sinners. I must keep close to my Text; and it speaks of such as have been before hinted.

1. Let us make inquiry what a Gentile Sinner is? In the general take this Answer.

A Gentile Sinner is the worst of Sinners; the vilest of Sinners: thus Gal. 2. 15. the Apostle describes them, *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles: They were reckoned the greatest sinners. Preach the Gospel to every Creature (viz.) Gentiles, as though they were not worthy the name*

Mark 16. 15.

name of men and women. That we may set off the Free Grace of God in *Christ* to poor Sinners, let us see a Scripture-map of Gentilism, or Gentile Sinners, that *Christ* is thus willing to be found of.

1. They are said to be Idolaters.

Howbeit, then when ye knew not God, Gal. 4. 8, *ye did service unto them, who were no Gods.* While they were in Heathenism, that is Gentilism; God is willing to be found of such. What though you have been Idolaters? yet such may have mercy from God. In that black Catalogue of Sinners, Idolaters are reckoned among the *Corinthians*, *such were some of you.* Idols are called the vanities of the Gentiles. Jer. 14. 22.

2. Gentiles were poor slaves. For Tit. 3. 3.

we our selves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, &c. They were servants to their lusts: their lusts did Lord it over them. *Know you not you are Servants to him whom you obey?* Yet of these poor Souls *Christ* is willing to be found. O do not say then, I am a poor Gentile, too great a Sinner ever to

Luk. 15.
15.

to find favour from the hands of God. The prodigal Gentile was a slave joyned to a Citizen to keep Swine, and yet God took him to be a Son ; out of the field into the house.

A&ts 17.

3. Gentiles are poor hood-winkt blind Souls. *Call in the blind and the halt ; (viz.)* the poor Gentiles now become the *Lord Jesus Christs* guests, and the Jewes are rejected. *The God of this world hath blinded their eyes :* they go muffled in ignorance of God and *Christ* from day to day : yet God is willing to be found of them. They are such muffled Creatures, that they are said to feel after God.

Luk. 10.
30, 31.

Joh. 3. 18.

4. A Gentile is a poor perishing Soul. The poor man that was wounded, and lay perishing of his wounds, is the poor Gentile, that *Jesus Christ* is the good *Samaritan* to, and binds up his wounds, and pours oyl into them. We may say we are all poor *Assyrians* ready to perish, and yet *Christ* is willing to be found of such. *Whosoever believes on him, Jew or Gentile, might not perish, but have everlasting life.* Doth thy poor Soul say as the poor prodigal

gal did, *and I perish for hunger?* O *Jesus Christ* is willing to be found of such.

5. A Gentile is a poor Soul that lies far from God. They are the inhabitants of the far Countrey. *You who were a far off, are brought nigh by the blood of Jesus.* He is there speaking of Gentiles. They are said by the Prophet to be *far from Righteousness*. Well poor Souls, *Christ* is willing to be found of such. Alas, Sir, sayes a poor Soul, I am a great way from *Christ*: O so were Gentiles; there was a wall of partition betwixt *Christ* and them; yet *Christ's* blood took it away, melted down the stones in this partition wall.

Eph. 2. 13.
14.

Isa. 46. ult.

6. A Gentile is a poor Soul without hope. Without *Christ*, without hope, can thou be worse? Yet *Christ* is willing to be found of such. Alas, sayes a poor Soul, I have no hope. Thou art a Gentile, a poor hopeles Soul. Because they are without Promise, they are without hope. The Heathens feigned when all was gone, yet Hope was in the bottom of *Pandora's* box, implying that Hope is a good refuge in calamity.

Eph. 2. 12.
Without
hope of
being sa-
ved with-
out *Christ*.

7. A

Rom. 2. 24.

*Christiani
sanctè vix-
issent, si
Christus
sancta do-
cuiisset.*

7. A Gentile is one that is a blasphemer of the name of God. *For the name of God is blasphemed through you.* They did take all occasions to speak evil of God, for the infirmities of his followers. *If Christ had taught them better, they would have lived better,* was the brand of Gentiles, cast upon Christ in Tertullians time. Paul tells us he was a Blasphemer, and yet obtained mercy. It is the spirit of a Gentile to speak evil of his Name, because of the miscarriages of his followers.

Mat. 6. 32.

8. A Gentile is one that seeks only after earthly things. An earthly spirit is the spirit of the Gentiles. *After these things, saith Christ, do the Gentiles seek.* It may be many poor Souls have made the comfort of the Creature their *Summum Bonum*; never sought after any thing for their Souls in all their lives: Yet Christ calls such to seek him; yea is willing to be found of such. What though thou hast been a poor earth-worm all thy dayes? yet if now thou seek the Lord, there is hope for thee; if thy heart be in good earnest for Heaven.

Take

Take these Scriptural descriptions of Gentiles, to set off the Free grace of God to the worst of Sinners.

• I. *Reason*, why *Jesus Christ* is willing to be found of poor *Gentile* Sinners.

I. Because this was the end of the Fathers donation; *Christ* is the great gift of his Father. Now surely the Lord would never have parted with such a gift as his own Son, but he had some great end in such a gift. Well, what was the Fathers design? *He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life*: That *Gentile* sinners might not perish to all eternity. Therefore we read of such Souls being *made nigh* Eph. 2. 18. *by the blood of Jesus*; and *through him we have both Access, (viz.) both Jews and Gentiles, to the Father, &c.* Many poor Souls are under Objections concerning the willingness of God to shew them mercy. Do you think that the Lord would have parted with his own Son for you, if he had not been willing to shew you mercy? The Prophet tells us, *He is given for a Covenant* Isa. 42. 6.

K

to

to the people, for a light to the Gentiles.

2. Reason, why *Jesus Christ* is willing to be found of poor *Gentile* sinners, this is evident from the invitations that he gives them to come in to him. O what an invitation is this very Call of my Text to such? O how do the affections of *Christ* sparkle in his invitations? 1. Consider his invitations are free: There is no merit on our side, there is no such thing, as worthiness in the Creature. *Christ* moves freely from Arguments springing up in his own bowels; My Creature will be lost else, this poor Soul will be undone for ever else: And as *Hester* said in that case, so sayes *Christ*, *How can my heart endure to see this evil come upon my people and kindred?* So, O sayes *Jesus Christ*, how can my heart endure to let this poor Soul go to Hell, and eternally perish? And thus his heart works freely in his invitations towards poor Sinners. 2. His invitations are affectionate invitations: invitations mixed with entreaties. *I beseech you be reconciled unto God.* *Christ* doth not only invite, but becomes a suppliant to

to the sinner. He comes to the Sinner, which is obstinate and inexorable, and upon his knees begs the Soul for his sake, for its own sake, to accept of terms of mercy and reconciliation.

3. They are importunate invitations. He doth not invite with an indifference of Spirit, whether we accept of his terms or no, but he invites in good earnest, and sets on invitations with pressing arguments, sometimes taking an argument from the Souls danger, if it close not with his invitations, sometimes an argument from the Souls duty, and sometimes an argument from the Souls benefit and profit; these are importunate invitations. 4. His invitations are daily and incessant invitations. Poor Sinners are daily invited, *Christ* is an every dayes Solicitor and Suitor; he waits to be gracious: If you deny him to day, he comes again to morrow; he doth not cast off for every present denial. 5. His invitations are universal; therefore thou mayst say as he did, *I am invited also*. O poor Sinner, God hath not excluded thee if thy unbelief exclude thee

not. 6. His invitations are upon the most solemn preparations that ever was : *All things are ready.* Hath he invited and prepared his guests, and doth not this argue his willingness to entertain ?

3. *Reason*, why the Lord *Jesus Christ* is willing to be found of Gentile Sinners, because upon this account the Father enters into a Covenant with the Son to reward him. There was a Covenant struck betwixt *Christ* and his Father, that upon his undertaking the great work of Mans Redemption, he would exalt him and glorifie him. *I will glorifie thee.* The Rewards of *Christ* for Redemption-work seem to consist in these things.

1. The conversion of Souls. *Is it a*
 Isa. 42. 6. *small thing thou raise the Tribes of Israel ? I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles :* as if *Christ* should stand with his Father and say, But Lord what will become of the poor Gentile part of the world ? Must they all dye in their sins and be damned ? O the heart of *Christ* was inflamed with love after the salvation of poor Sinners.

Sinners. Well, now the Lord gives him a Patent for Gentiles as well as Jews; a Patent of Free Grace : this is covenanted for, betwixt God the Father and the Son : this is the promise of Eternal Life before the world begun. *He shall see the travail of his Soul, and shall be satisfied.* Tit. i. 2.

2. His exaltation is promised. So he shall sprinkle nations, (*viz.*) convert them : Sprinkle them with his blood : an allusion to the blood of the Paschal Lamb, when the destroyer was to pass over. *And Kings shall shut their mouths at him :* Shall all be silent at the setting up of his Dominion; they shall be convinced of his Kingly Office and Dignity : Not a word to say against the Lord Jesus as King. Therefore sayes another Text, *He shall divide a portion with the great :* Some read it, *I will give him a portion among the great :* He shall have his day of visible greatness among them. Others read it, *He shall divide the Mighty as a prey :* This will be *Christs* work when he comes forth in Majesty, to prey upon all that stand in his way to his Kingdom. Isa. 52. 15. Isa. 53 ult. He shall conquer them, and deliver the Elect out of their hands.

dome, whether persons or things. Now this clearly demonstrates the point in hand; because God Covenants for this with him upon his undertaking Redemption and Salvation-work.

Application.

Is it so, that the Lord Jesus is willing to be found of Gentile Sinners? Then,

I. It informs us of the unspeakable love of *Jesus Christ* to poor Sinners. O how is it commended to us! *In this, that while we were Sinners he died for us; greater love than this hath no man.*

I. Is there not love in this, to be willing to be found of such as have been professed Enemies, proclaimed Traytors? The Lord hath proclaimed us upon our first apostasie to be Traytors and Rebels to him; but yet he hath sent out a proclamation of Peace; and look to that blessed proclamation, and lay hold of it by a hand of faith;

Isa. 27. 5. or, *Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.* You see here

is the proclamation to lay hold on. And so poor Souls, upon their falling in with *Christ* are at peace. Is not here love, shining love to poor dark Gentiles? Let us see the Proclamation renewed. *I am found of them that asked* Isa. 55. 1, 2
not for me, I am found of them that sought me not. I said, behold me, behold me, unto a Nation that was not called by my Name. I have spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, (viz.) to a company of poor obstinate Jews, and lo therefore I turn to the Gentiles. Behold, here I am, here I am; so some read it, as Christ holding out terms of Mercy, Life and Salvation to poor Sinners. If a man find his Enemy, sayes saul, will he let him go well away? O the love of Christ to Gentiles which were enemies!

2. Is there not love in this, to call these first to look after him? Is not this preventing love? *Did I look after him, said poor Hagar, who here sees me?* Alas, if the Lord had never found me out, I had never found him. He is called a Shepherd that seeks out his Sheep. O here do we run into corners

from this good Shepherd, untill he follow us! O what love is this!

3. Is there not love in this, to tell us there is a time coming when it will be too late to seek him? See how free and ingenuous, as I may say, Divine Love is; it tells us the worst, that we might be awakened to look about us. If you neglect but a while, follow your sins for a while, set out your day of Grace for a while, then it will be over, and the bowels of the Lord will be shut up in displeasure against you; and then you will say, as he upon his death-bed, *I have told you, now all is too late, all is now too late*. Is there not great love in warning Souls of danger before it comes?

4. Is there not love in this, that the Rejection of the Jews, the Cutting off them should be the grafting in of the Gentiles? O that such wild Olives should be partakers of the sweetness of the fat Olive! that ever such brambles should be inoculated into *Christ*! This raised up the spirit of *Paul* into a frame of admiration. The casting away of the Jews, was the reconciling of the world.

5. There

5. There is love in this, that *Christ* was so willing to come as his Fathers Gift, as a Commander and Leader to his People, as the words before speak. See how *Christs* heart ecchoes to the heart of the Father in the work of the Salvation of poor Sinners ! *In the volume of thy Book it is written, I come to do thy will, O God.*

2. Use. O then let us a little admire the condescention of *Christ* in this thing, that he is so willing to be found of poor Gentiles. It is no wonder, if upon the head of this Divine Mystery be written a *verily*, *Verily he took upon him not the nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham.* That he should overlook them Glorious Creatures; that Mercy should come to poor Gentiles over the head of Angels; how few take notice of this? Angels desire to look into these deeps; and yet we do not look into them with an eye of holy inspection and heavenly admiration. Heb. 2. 16.

3. Another word is this, If *Christ* be willing to be found of poor Gentile Sinners, it is then a Call to such to seek him, 1Pet. 1. 12.

him. *Seek him while he may be found.* May not I say to poor Sinners, as God argues the case with those Jews by the Prophet *Ezekiel, Why will ye dye O ye house of Israel?* So, why do poor Gentile Sinners neglect seeking the Lord Jesus? Is not this to go carelessly the ready way to your Eternal destruction? Is not this the rode to your Everlasting ruine? And will not the Lord say to you one day, as the Prophet to them, *Your destruction is of your selves?*

I. *Motive to seek the Lord.* He first is suitor to you, and seeks you; And is not this a mighty motive? This is that great loadstone that should draw the hearts of poor Sinners much in love with *Christ*: He loves them first: *Who loved us first.* *Christ* is first in the motion. *He came to seek and to save that which is lost.* Take that Parable of the Prodigal, his Father sent after him into the far Country, sought him out, *This my Son was lost, and is found.* Nay, *Christ* is the Shepherd of the Gentiles, and he seeks out his sheep in a dark and gloomy day. Alas, what is the Gospel but *Christ* sending after
poor

poor Sinners to woove them, to accept of terms of Grace and Mercy?

2. *Motive* to seek the Lord Jesus. His seeking you cost him dear. He laid down his life for his sheep. He sought you, and where did he find you? He found you slaves, and he must pay your ranfome for you. *I have found a ranfome for him.* His death is our ranfome. We were prisoners and captives, and could not be redeemed at a lower rate than *Christs* blood.

3. *Motive.* He comes from the Father to seek you. The verses going before are a Prophecy of *Christ* proceeding from the Father. *I have given him for a witneß.* And frequently when he is spoken of to poor Gentile Sinners, then he is said to come by way of donation. *I have given him a light to the Gentiles.* He comes and brings commendations of his Fathers love to poor Sinners. He is called the *faithful and true witneß of God.*

4. *Motive.* He came from Heaven to seek you. O what Glory he left to come and mind your Eternal concerns upon earth! I cannot, nay, what Man
or

or Angel can tell you what he forsook to seek you? He stript himself of all his Glory, of all his Royal Robes, to wash your feet, to wash you all over. He left his Throne. I remember it is storied of a King, that found a sheep in a ditch, and sate down on hands and knees, and pulled it out with his own hands. The Sheep is thy own Soul, this King is the Lord Jesus, the Ditch is thy Natural Condition in which thou hadst perished to all Eternity, if he had not come from Heaven to have pull'd thee out.

5. *Motive.* He seeks as impatient of denial. He is an importunate Seeker, he will not be said nay; seeks like a beggar that will not be gone from your doors. *Christ* will not be gone from the door of thy heart, he stands and knocks; he doth not knock as he passes by, but stands waiting for thy coming out to accept of him, and close with him; Therefore he beseeches, wooes, waits to be Gracious. He comes in Ordinance after Ordinance, Providence after Providence, Motion after Motion, and Day after Day : What sayest

sayest thou poor Soul, wilt thou now close with me? And as he did, *Wilt thou be made whole*, to the Leper? And O how loth to go away! when will it once be?

6. *Motive*. He is a Seeker that is grieved when he is denied. *He was grieved because of their unbelief, and the hardness of their hearts*. You cannot grieve *Christ* worse than deny him, when he comes to make out love to your Souls, and you slight him.

7. *Motive*. He seeks poor Sinners in their proper months. *In their months* Jer. 2.24. *one shall find them*: *Christ* knows the months to find Sinners in. All these *Motives* are taken from *Christ*, as the great seeker of Souls.

3. *Use* is of Reproof, 1. to such as neglect to seek the Lord, that seek him not at all. Yet they are Seekers, but not Seekers of the Lord. Gentiles are Seekers, *after these things the Gentiles seek*. They seek good trading, good livelihoods, &c. But alas, this is all they seek after. Nay, we read of some that *seek after Wizards*, they are so far from seeking after God. But the Lord says,

Lev. 10.
31. 20.6.

Prov. 23.
30.

sayes, he will set his face against such. Do you think, poor Seamen, and you their wives, that this is the way to have good voyages, to go to ask the Devil his Counsel? Some seek their lusts, like *Solomons* drunkard they say, they *will seek it yet again*. But all this while they seek not the Lord. O how few seek to the Lord? What are these poor Souls seeking, but the living among the dead?

1. See the danger of such as seek not the Lord. Such poor Souls see no worth in the Lord; and are not such to be reprov'd? If *Christ* be not worth seeking, he is worth nothing. When we see the worth of any thing, we will seek after it. The object we seek, must be some good. O how neglecters to seek *Christ* do undervalue *Christ*!

2. They never see a want of him. We seek not, that we want not. O but now when the poor Soul doth see its need of him, then it doth with the Spouse seek him. Poor Gentiles, they sit still. It is the Character of a Gentile to sit in darkness, *Unto you who sat in darkness a great light shined, (viz.)*
to

to Gentiles. They have no mind to rise off from their seat.

3. It will aggravate the condemnation of such, that *Christ* sought them, and they would not be found of him. *How often would I have gathered thee, &c.*

But there are a company of poor souls that object, what have we to do with *Christ*, such poor Sinners as we are?

O poor Souls, the great Promise is to such; *To it shall the Gentiles seek:* All poor Sinners must betake themselves to this Glorious Ensign. *The root of Jesse shall stand for an Ensign of the people, to it shall the Gentiles seek.* Isa. 11. 10.

But we are dark Creatures? *He came* Luk. 1. 79. *to give light to them that sate in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and guide our feet in the wayes of peace.*

Another Use is of Inquiry, If *Christ* be so willing to be found of Gentile Sinners, what then may be the reasons why poor Sinners do not seek the Lord Jesus? O how few Seekers hath the Lord Jesus! Sinners, it is true, are Seekers, but it is of the living among the dead.

I. POOR

Mat. 13.

44.45,46.

1. Poor Sinners ignorance of the worth of *Christ* : who will or can desire after an unknown good ? As he said to the woman, *If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst ask living water, and he would give it thee* : So do I say, If Souls knew the worth of *Christ*, they would cry, *None but Christ, none but Christ*. Nothing without *Christ*, nothing below *Christ*, would satisfy their Souls. The Merchant man could not be satisfied with goodly Pearls, after he had come to know there was a Pearl of Price; then all the goodly Pearls were out-shined by the Pearl of great Price, and now he is resolved upon any terms to have *Christ*. *He sells all*. O what difference betwixt this person and the young man in the Gospel, who when *Christ* bid him *sell all*, went away sorrowful ? O this broke the bargain betwixt him and *Christ*: He knew not the worth of *Christ*. It may be *Christ* is not much valued by you now, but ask your hearts the question, O my Soul, what will *Christ* be worth upon a death-bed ? What will *Christ* be worth when thy Soul is filled with

horreur

horror of thy own guilt? When thou art a *Magor Misabib* to thy self? Nay, it may be to all that are round about thee? When thy heart is made to meditate terror? Could thou ask the damned in Hell what *Christ* would be worth to them, what they would give, if it could be procured, for one offer of *Christ* in good earnest? It may be they might better inform thy judgement. If you did converse with awakened dying guilty consciences, or with poor damned Souls, they might tell you something of the worth of *Christ*, or with Souls deeply groaning under guilt at first Conversion, or with poor tempted Souls: These four sorts of persons can tell you what apprehensions they have of the worth of *Christ*. When men know the worth of a commodity, it will go hard but they will obtain it. O what will a Malefactor judge a Pardon worth! So doth a poor self-condemned Sinner judge of *Christ*.

2. Poor Sinners seek not after the Lord, because they are lockt up under infidelity and unbelief. We read of

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being concluded and shut up under unbelief, as close prisoners under lock and key (*in arētā custodiā*) they are in Satans close custody.

1. Poor Sinners believe not *Christs* willingness to embrace and entertain their poor Souls upon closure with him. Untill poor Sinners be convinced of this, they can never make out after *Christ*. Therefore it is we read of *Christs* invitations, and asseverations, entreaties, promises; all to demonstrate his willingness to be found of sinners, when they seek him. Alas, poor sinners take up false conceptions of *Christ*; they think his heart is hardned against them, and his bowels shut up in displeasure, and they take him for their adversary, and all this is their unbelief; and so are hindred from looking out after *Christ*.

2. Poor Sinners believe not the Fathers willingness to shew them mercy. Many Souls stick here, though *Christ* hath told them, he hath declared his Fathers Name, and would declare it to poor sinners. O what pains doth *Christ* take to convince of his Fathers
good

good will ! *This is the will of him that* Joh. 6.37.
sent me. 38.

5. Poor Sinners believe not an indispensable necessity to close with *Christ*. They do not see their Souls lost for ever without a *Christ*. And this brings me to the next particular.

3. Poor Sinners seek not after the Lord Jesus, because they are not thoroughly convinced of their misery without *Christ*. Peter did not cry out, *Master save me or I perish*, until he begun to sink : So poor Souls cry not after *Christ*, seek not after *Christ*, until they see themselves in a perishing sinking condition. Persons may fall under some convictions of their misery, but alas, they are slighty convictions, and so wear off the next temptation that comes upon their Soul : But when the conviction gets to the heart, then it is hopeful. When they were *prickt to the heart*, then they cryed out, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do ?* There are many convictions that get no farther than the head. But now when a sense of misery is clapt to a mans heart, it will make him look out after *Christ*.

Let me shew poor Sinners something of their misery without *Christ*.

1. You are without hope; and is not this the height of misery? Hope doth yield the Soul some relief in the saddest condition; but to be without hope, is to be in Hell above ground. What is it that makes Hell, Hell? they have no hope of ever coming forth, from the pit there is no redemption. If a man be in *Algier*, hope keeps up his heart, that he shall be redeemed one day: But there is not one prisoner of hope in all hell among all the damned.

2. Without *Christ* you are condemned men already. *There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.* Then it follows, they that are out of *Christ Jesus*, are under the sentence of condemnation. What a miserable condition doth a poor condemned creature think himself to be in, and cannot rest night nor day but thinking of his execution? This is the case of a poor Soul out of *Christ*; though the Soul be not convinced of it.

3. The misery of a Soul out of *Christ*
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is in this, it is eternal misery. The eternity of the misery is the sting of Hell, and the very emphasis of damnation. To be miserable a thousand years, and then to come out of it, the very thoughts of a better estate would be some kind of ease to the oppressed mind : but their misery is like to be endless; and this compleats the misery. It is called *everlasting destruction* ^{2 Thes. 1.}
from the presence of the Lord, &c. ^{8.} This brings me orderly to the next head.

4. Poor Sinners seek not out to the Lord Jesus, because they are not convinced throughly of a future state of the Soul. They are not under the powerful sense of the Souls immortality. Who will seek out to *Christ*, if they be not convinced that the Soul is an immortal being? *Christ's* errand from Heaven to Earth is in vain, his whole series of suffering is in vain, his whole undertaking of the work of mans redemption in vain, if there be no future state of the Soul : But because we live in a time and day that Atheism doth abound, let me offer by way of conviction some few Argu-

ments to prove the future state of the Soul. Alas, men look not out after *Christ*, because they are not taken up with Eternity.

1. Argument is taken from *Christ's* death, which was to *deliver from wrath to come*. Then there is such a thing as wrath to come, which could not be if there were no future state of the Soul.

1 Thes. 1.
10.

2. Argument of a future state is from the horreur that wicked men feel sometimes in their consciences, when they are awakened. O what *Magor Misabibs* are they to themselves sometimes! Crying out, Wo is them that ever they were born, to sin such wrath upon their own heads. These are the sparks of Hell that are gotten into the Conscience in this life, this is the gnawing of that worm that never dyes.

3. Argument is taken from the wishes of the wicked that they might dye the death of the Righteous, as *Balaam* desired.

4. Argument is taken from the sufferings of Saints. *What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his*

his own soul? which is brought in to the Disciples to caution them against Apostasie. O, say poor believers, we may lose our Souls, and therefore we may not apostatize from God, and therefore they will suffer the loss of all. The poor people of God make a sad bargain of it, if they suffer, and yet there should be no reward.

5. Argument is taken from the great desires that sometimes Believers have to be dissolved, as *Paul* did; which, if there were no enjoyment of God after, would greatly be to believers loss, because they enjoy something of God here.

6. Argument is taken from the great joy that many Saints have had in their passage into another world. How have they gone off the stage of this present life with triumph, and died boasting and glorying in God?

7. Argument is taken from Saints Communion with God. If there be such a thing here, then much more hereafter; what we enjoy here is but a drop to the Ocean.

8. Argument is taken from mens

natural unwillingness to dye. Certainly there some thing follows death, that the Soul cannot endure to think on. It is true, the dissolving of the marriage-knot betwixt such two dear lovers, as Soul and Body, is tedious to think of, yet there is some preapprehensions of eternity, that trouble the Soul, that it cannot think of death with any quiet or comfort.

9. Argument is taken from the end of *Christs* appointments. God hath appointed the means of Grace in reference to the salvation of poor Souls. *That thou may save thy own Soul, and them that hear thee.*

10. Argument from the endeavours of Satan, *seeking whom he may devour* (or drink up, as the word is.) Satan would spare his pains, if there were no future state of the Soul. Now it is no wonder if poor sinners seek not the Lord Jesus, when they lay not their souls under the convictions of the state of the Soul after death.

5. Poor Sinners seek not after the *Lord Jesus Christ*, because they are diverted by their worldly enjoyments
and

and employments. We read of some that made excuses, and all their excuses were from their worldly business, they could not come. I have observed that young persons who have been under some notable convictions, and resolutions to close with *Christ*, and seek after *Christ*, if ever they have abated and cooled in their first love, it hath been when they have entred upon the world, changed their conditions, set up for themselves; the world hath stoln their hearts from God. O how sad is this! The world broke the bargain betwixt *Christ* and the young man in the Gospel.

O but sayes a poor Soul, I know not how to seek *Christ*: I am a poor Gentile Sinner that have sate in darkness; and am in my dark state of Gentilism to this day, and how shall I seek the Lord Jesus that is, you say, thus willing to be found of me?

I. Seek the Lord betimes. If you would be speeding Seekers of *Christ*, Job 8. 5. you must not be loyterers; there is but in time and out of time. Make no delay therefore, poor sinner, in seeking

ing the *Lord Jesus Christ*; take the present time by the fore-lock. While it is to day, hearken to his voice : Now acquaint your selves with God. We must take hold of the present time. *They that seek me early shall find me ;* (shall morning me, the Hebrew is.) We must in our seeking give the morning to God. It is observable, in the morning *Jacob* got the blessing ; in the morning the Lord looked through the cloud, and discomfited the *Ægyptian Host* : Nay, *Christ* himself is called *the Hinde of the morning, the morning-star*; and all to teach us to seek him in the morning. The first fruits were to be dedicated to the Lord ; the firstling of every Creature was to be offered up in Sacrifice to the Lord : but the firstling of an *Ass* being so dull a Creature, God would not accept it in sacrifice.

I. We should seek the Lord early, because the present time is the only time to seek the Lord in. Now is the acceptable time. now is the day of salvation, &c. Upon this monosyllable *Now* depends Eternity (sayes one.)
There

There is a present time, and a present Truth for us to lay hold on. It was a good saying of him when invited to dinner to morrow, sayes he, *I have not promised my self a [to morrow] this many years. Who knows, sayes Solomon, what to morrow may bring forth?* What is in the womb of to morrow? What if thy death, nay, thy damnation should be in the womb of another day? We read of death and what was at the heels of death? and Hell immediately followed him.

2. Seek the Lord early; you cannot promise your selves any more seasons of Grace. If God should prolong your lives, your day of Grace may have its sun-set on a sudden; and alas, what good will your lives do you, when you are wrapt up in gross darkness? May not you say already, Woe unto us our day goeth away! Alas, there is a night coming when no man can work.

3. Seek the Lord early; If you have your lives lengthened, your means of Grace continued, yet you cannot promise your selves any more gales of the Spirit

Spirit of God to breath upon you. And alas, what will Gospel Ordinances signifie to you, without the spirits influences breathing in them? What is the most precious Ministry you can sit under, if not influenced from the Lord, by the efficacy of his own Spirit?

4. Seek the Lord early; you have loytered long, you have slept much of your day of Grace away already. *He that sleeps in harvest is a Son that causeth shame; but he that gathereth in summer is a wise Son.* O what a harvest of the Gospel have we slept in! O what a spirit of deep sleep and slumber hath fallen upon us! O that we may all take that counsel, *Up and be doing, and the Lord will be with you.* Up and be seeking *Christ* early.

5. The longer you neglect to seek the Lord Jesus, the more difficult it will be for you. Your very sloth will take away your hearts: the more a man sits still, the less mind he hath to stir. Sitting is a pleasing posture; it is the description of Gentile Sinners, *they sit in darkness*; they are pleased with their dark state: And it is hard
when

when we have indulged our sloth, to stir up our selves to lay hold of God.

2. Seek the Lord earnestly as well as early. It is said of *Christ*, he prayed earnestly, when in his agony; and we read of striving to enter in at the strait gate. Strive to an agony; put your Souls into an agony: So we must seek *Christ*, having our Souls in an agony. Poor Souls, it may be, fall under some general convictions of their sins, and they are now put upon seeking the Lord; but alas, it is with a kind of indifference of spirit, as though they cared not whether they found him or not. We should seek the Lord with *Jacobs* resolution; *I will not let thee* ^{2 Cant. 1.} *go except thou bless me.* The Spouse ^{2, 3, 4.} by night sought *Christ*: in a night of persecution (some refer it to that night of persecution by *Antiochus Epiphanes*) yet she gives not over seeking; but did she find him? No, she found him not. Now she might have fallen under some temptation to give over, *why should I wait upon the Lord any longer?* O no, but she falls now upon an earnest search and enquiry after him, and now she finds him.

3. Seek

3. Seek the Lord under the sense of a promise (*viz.*) believingly. They that seek shall find. If we have not our practice bottomed in our seeking of *Christ* upon some promise, we shall have no comfort in it. But now when the Soul sayes, I will go a seeking *Christ*, but I will carry a promise with me; O this is very comfortable! *Un-to him shall the Gentiles seek; and, in him shall the Gentiles trust.* This is the Great *Magna Charta* of the Gentiles; thou must not seek to thy own Righteousness. We read of seeking that way. You must not trust in your selves, but *in his Name shall the Gentiles trust.* If you know not where to trust, come hither, and here place your trust. Many Souls seek *Christ*, but their eye of faith is not up to the promise in their seeking of him.

Isa. 42. 2.

Mat. 12.
18.

4. We are to seek the Lord in a through sense of our lost condition without him. Many Souls seek *Christ*, but they do it not in a sense of their undone condition. It is the lost Soul that is the right seeker of *Christ*. *Christ* seeks such Souls, and such Souls seek *Christ*;

Christ ; then they are like to meet. That which is promised of the Jews Return holds good here ; *Going and weeping, seeking the Lord their God, &c.* Jer. 50. 5. It will make you seek him weeping, if you were but convinced, you were lost to all Eternity, undone for ever, irrecoverably miserable, if you find not *Christ*. The first step to seek *Christ*, is to be convinced of ones lost condition. O now the Soul falls inquiring after *Christ* ; *If you see him whom my Soul loves, tell him, I am sick of love.*

5. Seek *Christ* perseveringly. Thus the Spouse did seek *Christ* untill she found him ; as the woman sought her lost groat until she found it. The watchmen smote the Spouse, and took away her veil from her, yet she gives not over seeking her beloved. The watchmen, either the Ministerial watchmen, or the Magisterial, upon the City walls, they took away her veil (*viz.*) a token of subjection to *Christ* ; yet she perseveres still seeking *Christ*. *Jacob* wrestled until the break of day : He was a persevering wrestler, and then came the blessing.

6. We

6. We must seek *Christ* as appointed by the Father to entertain poor Gentile Sinners. Therefore we see the Commission of *Christ* is to carry it tenderly towards poor Gentiles, smooching flaxes, and bruised reeds. The Father hath put this work upon him, to treat with poor Gentiles about their everlasting Salvation : and therefore we must seek *Christ* distinctly, under a distinct notion, as the Father hath commissioned him. Poor Sinners get some confused notions and apprehensions of *Christ*, and upon these notions they seek *Christ* : but all this while they are ignorant of *Christs* being sent as the Fathers Commissioner to treat with poor Sinners about the things that concern their peace. Several words the Spirit of God hath bestowed upon this thing, noting to us that it is a matter of such great concernment.

Rom. 3.
25. 1. He hath set him forth to be a propitiation, or fore-ordained him to this end and purpose.

2. God hath chosen him, *My Servant whom I have chosen.*

Isa. 42. 6. 3. God hath called him.

4. God

4. God hath anointed him to this purpose.

5. God hath sent him ; now we should consider all these, and seek him as one thus sent by his Father to treat with poor Sinners.

7. We must seek whole *Christ* in all his Offices. *As you have received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk you in him.* This is whole *Christ* ; as Prophet, Priest, and Lord. And thus should poor Gentile Sinners seek the Lord Jesus.

The second *Observation* is this :

That there are especial times for Sinners to find the Lord Jesus Christ in. Seek the Lord while he may be found.

We read *David* pointing out such a time, *For this shall every one that is* Psal. 32. 6.
Godly pray unto thee in a time, when thou wilt be found : or, in a finding time (so we should read it ;) Others read it *in a time of hitting*, when Gods judgements go abroad, and the Lord hits the consciences. But *David* had been confessing his sins, and the Lord forgives him, and the sense of this forgiveness

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giveness raises his heart so, that he breaks out thus, the Godly shall pray unto thee in such a time, in an especial time. *O Jerusalem hadst thou known in this thy day!* It was an especial time in which they might have found the Lord, he so sweetly offering himself to them in the Gospel. *Solomon* tells us, *A wise mans heart discerneth time and judgment; because to every purpose there is a time and judgment; therefore the misery of man is great upon him.* So in this case, there is a time, an especial time to put your Spiritual purposes into execution, to seek the Lord Jesus in : Therefore that was good Counsel, *Now acquaint thy self with God, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come upon thee.* Now seek the Lord. There are some especial *Nows* that we should all improve and lay hold on. *Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation, &c. I passed by thee, and saw thee in thy blood, and then it was a time of love, &c.*

The great question will be, what are these especial times, in which *Christ* is willing to be found?

I. When

i. When he offers himself in the tenders of the Gospel. *O Jerusalem, hadst thou known in this thy day.* It was a peculiar time in which the Lord Jesus was preached to them. Now *Christ* is willing to be found of you. What is the Gospel but *Christ* seeking out his Sheep, his voice calling in his Sheep; *Christ* following poor sinners with invitations and entreaties, that they would return unto him and live? We read of the Shepherd seeking out his sheep. Would *Christ* offer himself, but that it is an especial time of love? O poor Souls, take heed as you reject these offers. 1. These offers of *Christ* are a fruit of his blood; if he had not died, he never had been tendred to you; and for you to refuse these offers, is for you to reject his purchase, nay, for you to tread his blood under-foot, and account the blood of the Covenant an unclean thing. And O how must this needs provoke the Lord, as is said in the parable of the Supper, when they all had refused, the Lord was angry, and resolved that none of them should taste

of his Supper. 2. These offers are offers of life and salvation; O then take heed of rejecting them. *You will not come to me that you may have life.* Now is an especial time, you may have life. If a poor condemned Malefactor should but have his life offered him, O how would he be transported with joy! And this is the case of every poor sinner out of *Christ*; he is under a sentence of condemnation, and *Christ* comes and offers them their lives. O then as we value the lives of our precious Souls, let us not reject the offers of *Christ*. 3. The offers of *Christ* are unasked, unsought for by us, therefore it is now an especial finding time. Thou poor sinner dost not come forth and ask a *Christ*, and cry for *Christ*, and lament after *Christ*. O no, but *Christ* came out to offer himself to thy poor Soul, when thou lay dying and perishing in thy blood, then he said unto thee unasked, Live. 4. The offers of *Christ* are not only of his Grace but of himself: He offers not only what he hath, but what he is, to thy Soul. *But my people would have*
none

none of me. He that hath the Son, hath life. There must be an union with the Son, a closing with the person of *Christ*, as well as with the promise of *Christ*. Now this is more than to offer Grace, yea, than to offer Heaven to poor sinners. Therefore it is we read of the marriage of the Kings Son: and shall we despise such a match as this? God forbid. 5. Surely this is a finding time in an especial manner, he offers with entreaties, and invitations to accept. He doth not make an offer and away, as careless whether poor sinners accept or no: but he follows his offers with arguments, if by any means he might prevail with poor Souls, before it be too late. 6. He offers all he hath. O will neither his person nor his benefits take with the Souls of poor sinners? All he hath may be yours; If he have pardoning mercy, it is yours; if he have sanctifying mercy, it is yours; if he have comforting mercy, it is yours. He interests you in all his fulness upon your closure with him: He bestows upon you a large joynture upon your marriage

riage with him. All is yours. Then certainly this is an especial finding time.

2. The second especial finding time is, when the Spirit breaths upon sinners in their attendances upon God. We read of a certain season in which the Angel came down and moved the waters. There are some certain seasons that the Spirit of God doth breathe more freely upon poor sinners than at other times; and these times we are to make an especial improvement of. The Spirit of God, it is said, came upon *Sampson* by times. Certain breezes, if you will give me leave to call them so, that come from Heaven at certain times. *The wind blows where it listeth.* O but poor Souls, be sure you lose not these winds; when they stand fair for Heaven, do not let them slip; lose not a gale for Eternity, for they are especial finding times. 1. These gales once gone, and they are irrecoverable. There is no buying a wind for Heaven, if you would give all the world for it: one fair gale lost, and thy poor Soul may lye wind-bound unto thy
very

very dying day. 2. These gales once gone, and your hearts harden. Sinners hearts harden, as the gales of the spirit of God are abused, and so suspended. And O what a sad case will it be for a poor Sinner to lye upon a death-bed crying out, this heart of mine, as very a stone as it is, as hard, as it is now, once was breathed upon by the Spirit to close with *Christ*, but I sinned all those precious breathings from my Soul, and so by degrees hardned for Hell apace. 3. These winds will not alwayes blow upon you, the wind will not alwayes stands here. Say so when under the Spirits breathings. The wind will not alwayes hold thus fair for Heaven; it will not alwayes blow in this quarter. *My Spirit shall not alwayes strive with man.* You must not think of having a trade-wind for Heaven. 4. These gales must you give an account for. Why did not you move with such a fair wind, when you had it? This question one day will be asked your precious Souls. O what answer will you give in that day? Did not my Spirit strive with you? but

you resisted it, and vexed it, and quenched it. Every motion you ever had and slighted, will come in as an evidence against you another day.

5. These gales once gone will fill your Souls with horreur that you have lost them; that you were in so fair a way for closing with *Christ*, and yet miss of him; so nigh the Kingdom, and never come at it. O how it grieves a man to miscarry, that had once a fair wind! O had I but taken the opportunity of a wind, how happy had I been! Who can think of it, but with dread, to look back upon all the motions that you have lost, all the breathings you have lost, and to say under the sense of all these being lost, Now your Souls are lost too?

3. Especial finding time is in a time of universal calamities and judgments upon nations. When the deluge is abroad upon the face of the earth, then he is willing to ask Souls to let them have room in himself. *For this shall every one pray unto thee in a time when thou wilt be found* (and observe what follows) *Surely in the floods of great waters*

Psal. 32. 6.

waters they shall not come nigh thee.
 Some Expositors take it of a finding
 God in a time of general trouble and
 calamity. Therefore we have that
 sweet counsel, *Seek ye the Lord, seek* Zeph. 2.3.
meekness if that you may be hid in the
day of the Lords anger. When the Lords
 Judgements are abroad, he calls upon
 poor Sinners to sue to him, after an
 especial manner. O poor sinners, *How*
can your hearts endure, or your hands
be made strong in the day that I shall
deal with you? (saith the Lord.) You
 will be like the man-slayer that had
 no City of Refuge to fly to, when the
 avenger of blood was upon him: And
 was not this a very sad case? Well
 may it be said to such, *What will you*
do in the day of your Visitation? and
where will you leave your Glory? and Isa. 10. 2.
whither will you flee for help? 3. God
 would never have given that especial
 counsel, when he was to march in his
 anger through Israel, therefore prepare
 to meet thy God O Israel, if he did not
 aime, it should be an especial time of
 finding him. O what a Christ seeking,
 nay finding time was the plague, when
 death

death and danger faced you every day, nay every hour? when the Grave and Hell opened their mouths wide to swallow you?

4. Another especial time of finding, is, a time of personal affliction : when sinners months are upon them, *in their*
 Jer. 2. 24. *months one shall find her*, spoken of the wild Afs. So it is with a poor Sinner. He cannot be tamed, cannot be brought to hand, brought to the hand of *Christ* : but when affliction is upon the sinner, O then it is an *Ephraim* ;
 Jer. 37. 18, 19. *Thou chastisedst me and I was chastised, as a Bullock unaccustomed to the yoke ; but yet the Lord tamed the Bullock. Manasseh as wild as he was, was thus tamed, and brought to seek the Lord, when he was in the bryars and fetters. Now is a time for the sinner to return*
 Job 36. 9. *from iniquity : (so Job hath it) In their affliction they will seek me early.*

5. Another especial time of finding *Christ*, is, when the Soul is under the sense of its bewildred, lost estate and condition ; O then the Soul looks out after *Christ* ; sees it is undone without *Christ*, a perishing lost Soul for ever.

This

This put the Prodigal upon returning to his Father, *and I perish by hunger.* The Lord allures the Soul into the wilderness, it knows not what to make of its condition, it is in a wilderness of doubts and objections, but yet *Christ* now is found of it, and speaks comfortably unto it. Now the Soul doth as the four Lepers in the gate of *Samaria*; they were under the sentence of death in their own apprehensions, and therefore they conclude they could but dye: So they resolve to go into the *Affyrian* Camp; rather than dye in the Gate they would dye in the Field. Thus sayes a poor Soul, I can but dye, therefore I will go out to *Christ*, and if I dye I will dye at his foot, if I perish I perish. Now this is a time wherein the Lord is found of poor Souls.

6. Another especial time, is a time of violent and fierce assaults and temptations from Satan. *Paul* looked upon this time to be an especial praying time. *Paul besought the Lord thrice: 2 Cor. 12.* and it was an answering time, *my Grace* ^{7, 8.} *is sufficient for thee.* Satan, he is the great

great Seeker after Souls, *seeking whom he may devour*. O now the Soul runs from Satan to *Jesus Christ*, to take sanctuary in *Christ*. Some poor Souls have cause to bless God for their temptation-experiences, upon this very account that Satan's assaults have hastened them to *Christ*. Thus God outshoots Satan in his own bow.

7. When the Soul meets with disappointments from the Creature, this is another especial finding time. The poor Church speaks as a disappointed people; *Come let us return unto the Lord*. We have been big-bellied with expectations and hopes from the Creature, but all proves but a tympany: come therefore say they, let us return unto the Lord; He will not disappoint us. The Lord was resolved to make up a hedge of disappointments against the poor Church, and now she resolves
- Hof. 6. 1. what to do. *I will return to my first Husband, it was better with me then than it is now*. Disappointments have been the occasion of the conversion of many. The Prodigal would fain have filled his belly with the husks the Swine

Swine did eat ; here was his desire :
no man gave him to eat ; here was his
disappointment. And what then does
he resolve on ? O then he resolves to
arise and go to his Father.

Application.

Is it so, that there are some especial
times of finding *Christ* ? then it is a
word of counsel. O then let no such
times slip you ! Lay hold of the fore-
lock of your especial times. There is
time and opportunity, and we distin-
guish betwixt them : opportunity is
time filled up with seasons of Grace.
O be sure then poor Souls you redeem
opportunities. It is the same counsel
that the Apostle gives them, *Redeem* Eph. 5. 15,
the time ; and the reason is very co- 16.
gent, *for the dayes are evil*. A man
hath a fair wind ; he hath waited long
for it ; and now it is come about, he
will not neglect it. O when the wind
presents, be sure then you take it ! O
poor Soul, hast thou not laid long
without a wind for Heaven ? Well,
now it is come about. O then im-
prove

prove it. O poor Soul, put not off these precious gales; say not, come again to morrow.

1. These especial seasons and times you must be accountable for. And can you answer it before the Great God, Sinners, that you did trifle with those seasons that did concern your immortal Souls? God puts every Sermon upon account, every Sabbath upon account, every Motion, nay, every Conviction upon account; they are all bookt down in Gods book of Remembrance; and though you have forgotten them, yet he hath not. O what horror will fill your Souls, and what confusion of face will be upon you, when you shall be called to an account for all your especial times of finding *Christ*? 2. These especial times of finding *Christ*, are not all persons priviledges. He hath not dealt with all people as with you. How many parts of the world that never were enriched with the tenders of Gospel-grace as you have been, but lie in the rubbish of ignorance and ungodliness? Nay, how many that have lived under the
found

found of the Gospel, and yet the Gospel is hid to them, and such souls are lost? And shall your Souls be privileged above others in the being under these especial seasons, and you not improve them? 3. These especial times if you let slip, you will be hardened and rivetted in your sins. After men have sinned away the day of Grace, O then they grow worse and worse. Then their poor Souls do swim down the stream of all manner of prophaneness. Have you not often observed it, that after sinners have worn off their Convictions they have been more careless, more prophane, more resolute in their course of sin? 4. These especial times if you let them slip, it may be, you shall never have such times again. *My Spirit shall no more strive with man.* His bowels will be shut up in displeasure against you. You may out-live the breathings of the Lord upon your Souls. And O if God should awaken you, and cause you to reflect upon what hath past betwixt God and your Souls, O then it may be you will cry out, O that it were

were with me as in months past ! O for one of the Motions of the Spirit of God I have sleighted ! O for one of the Convictions I have murdered !

5. These especial times will exceedingly aggravate your sin, in standing out against *Christ*. A woe was written upon the head of *Capernaum* and *Bethsaida*. O when *Christ* shall say, what have you to say for your selves ? was not I tendred unto you ? was not I offered with all the benefits of my death ? but you would none of me. O now how will such poor Souls run to the rocks, yea be fit to creep into the holes of the ragged rocks for the Majesty of the Lord ?

2. Word is a word of direction. What shall we do by way of improvement of these especial times, or how shall we improve them ?

1. Would you improve these especial finding times ? Then 1. Lament sensibly over your lost time. Lapsed time goes to the heart of a poor convinced sinner : nothing doth cut so deep, as the consideration of trifling away golden seasons of Grace. It was the
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the charge the Lord brought in against *Jezabel*, I gave her space to repent, but she repented not. O for a poor soul to reflect upon the time that is past, then it will cry as *Job* did in that case, *O that it were with me as in months that are past!* O that I might enjoy one of the dayes of the Son of Man, that I have so slighted! The Apostle tells us of some who for the time might have been Teachers of others, but alas they had lost their time. If you lose but a tide-time, you can fret at that, and be impatient: O how many tide-times have you lost for Eternity? Every appointment of *Christ*, in which the Spirit of *Christ* breaths, is a tide-time. O how many market-dayes for Heaven have your Souls lost? And can you remember them, and not lament over them?

2. Would you improve these especial finding times? Consider then, you cannot mis-improve, neglect these, but you put a sleight upon *Christ*. O how dangerous is this to put a sleight upon the Lord Jesus, when he is willing to be found of you! What a sleight was

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that

that they put upon *Christ*, when they made all their excuses, they could not come ! when *Christ* tenders himself and is refused. Therefore he complained, *but my people would have none of me.* For the *Lord Jesus Christ* to leave the bosome of his Father, the Glory of Heaven, and be clothed in, and married to our nature, and be made a curse for us, and after all this to be slighted by a company of poor sinners ; O what monstrous ingratitude is this ! Would we slight a Relation, a Friend, an Acquaintance thus ? Is not this to be highly uncivil to *Jesus Christ* ? O how do poor sinners put their incivilities upon *Christ* !

3. Would you not mis-improve these especial finding times ? then consider how this grieves *Christ*. When he came nigh the City, he wept over it ; what was the matter ? this was the consideration that did draw tears from *Christ's* eyes, that they had enjoyed an especial time, and day of Grace in which *Christ* was willing to have been found of them. *O that thou hadst known in this thy day, &c.* We read also of those

those that refused the tenders of *Christ*, the master of the house was angry at them. O take heed of angring *Christ*, poor sinners, in this respect. *Kiss the Sun lest he be angry.* What if he be, and you perish from the way? *When his wrath is kindled but a little.* Blessed are they that trust in him. O who can stand before the wrath of the Lamb? Yea, what can cover us from the wrath of the Lamb? O what ingratitude is this, to grieve him for loving you, to requite him evil for good! Is this your kindness to your friend? Will you thus requite the Lord, O you foolish Souls? Do you thus answer his love in coming from heaven upon your errand? It is said, the Lord *Jesus Christ was grieved because of their unbelief, and the hardness of their hearts.* You would not willingly grieve a Relation, a Father, a Mother; and will you grieve *Christ*?

Pl. 2. ult.

4. *Direction.* Would you not mis-improve these especial finding times? then live in the consideration of what depends upon them. Upon these times depend your eternal conditions: up-

on these monosyllables depends eternity ; upon these *Nows*, these present gales, and seasons of Grace. We say of some business, that we are very solicitous about, there is much depends upon it. It is a matter of grand importance. This is the case ; thy laying hold of these special times, is a business of great moment , as much as your immortal Souls are worth. O that every time you prayed, you might say, this is for eternity : and every time you heard a Sermon, O poor Soul, this is for eternity. As that great Painter said, *propter eternitatem pingo*: So should every poor sinner say of his duties. Write *Eternity* upon the head of them. I have read of one that lived many years in a Cave under the earth among multitudes of Gnats, to the wonder of many ; he was insensible of their disturbances: and the reason given is this, he was come thither to contemplate eternity. So do I say, the consideration and contemplation of eternity would make you forget the world and the comforts of it, when you make your approaches to God.

3. Would

5. Would you not mis-improve these especial finding times? O then live much in the consideration of the worth of your Souls. You cannot slight the seasons of Grace, but you slight your own Souls. O that that word were daily before you, *What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?* It is one of the first considerations usually that sets a poor sinner upon looking out after *Christ*, What will become of my Soul, if I dye in this condition? Am I not eternally undone? and then what am I better for all the trash I have gathered together? What gaineth it the Hypocrite, when the Lord shall take away his Soul? 1. Consider your Souls are Heaven-born Souls, from above, breathed in by God; and will you slight them? 2. A spiritual being. 3. An immortal being. 4. A being that cannot be satisfied with any sublunary objects. 5. A Soul capable of Communion with God here. 6. Capable of the fruition of God hereafter.

3. *Use*, is a word of examination,

or inquiry. Are there some especial times and seasons in which *Christ* is willing to be found? Then have ever your poor Souls found *Christ* in these times? Is not this an inquiry worth following? By being *found of Christ*, I mean as the word explains it, closed with *Christ*. When *Christ* and a poor Soul meets, a poor Soul takes *Christ*, and accepts of him upon the terms of the Gospel, and *Christ* takes a poor Soul : for as there is a taking and receiving of *Christ*, so there is a receiving on *Christ's* side.

I. If your Souls have found *Christ*, then you have seen your Souls in a lost, and bewildred condition, *this my Son was lost, and is found*. He was bewildred in his far Country, but now his return was his finding time. *Christ* usually meets with the Soul in the wilderness, *I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her*. Hos. 2. 14. O how is a poor Soul at its first finding *Christ* bewildred and lost, cannot tell what to make of his condition, sees nothing but misery before it, sees nothing but Hell gaping upon him, cries

cries out, it is undone; and without hope!

2. If you have found *Christ*, then you will sell all, part with all for him. You read of the Merchant man that when he had found the Pearl of price, he sold all to purchase it. Some take it, he sold all his sins he so dearly loved before, parted with them : Some take it, he parted with all his own Righteousness, which we are naturally as loth to part with as our Sins. O thus did *Paul*, when he accounted *all things dung and dross in comparison of the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord*. They that have found the Lord Jesus, they do not stand with him. We read, this was that which caused the young man in the Gospel to leave *Christ*, he could not part with all, *he had great possessions*. Now you are like to be tried, whether you have found *Christ* or no. If you have found the *Lord Jesus Christ*, you have not only been convinced of sin, and so seen your lost condition; but you have been convinced of Righteousness. There are many poor Souls that stick at their

Mat. 13.
44.

convictions of sin, and get no further, and prove like foolish children, that stay long in the place of breaking forth : but all this while throws and pangs are put upon the Soul to prepare for the birth, yet the Soul hath not closed with *Christ*. The poor sinner is but now like a man convinced of his disease, and sees his misery, but is at an utter loss for a remedy. O but now the convictions of the Righteousness of *Christ* to pardon, and freely justify the sinner, this is the remedy. A sight of sin, without a sight of *Christ* is no converting work. You may be convinced of your sins, and dye in them, and go to Hell in them. When the poor Prodigal was found, O then the best Robe (*viz.*) *Christ's* Righteousness was to be fetcht forth and put upon him. Now poor Soul, did thou ever take thy flight to *Christ's* Righteousness, to be found in him? When the poor Infant we read of, was found out in its blood, what did God? says the Text, *he cast his skirt over it*, (*viz.*) the skirt of the robe of his righteousness.

4. If you have found *Christ* you will now know how you part with him. *I found my Beloved* (sayes the Spouse.) O but it was after long seeking! And now doth she hold him with as slack a hand of faith as she did? O no, *I will hold him, and will not let him go.* O now the Soul resolves nothing shall separate him from the love of God in *Christ Jesus*.

5. If you have found *Christ*, you will commend him unto others, and set him off to others, that they may seek him also. Thus did the Spouse, *This is my Beloved*; and she commends him in every part, from Top to Toe. And what is the fruit of this setting forth the excellency of *Christ*? *We will seek him with thee.* Lovers will be commending one another. O how dost thou speak of *Christ*? doth thy Soul tell others what a Beloved thy Beloved is? what a blessed *Christ*, thy *Christ* is? and say, this is my Beloved, and this is my Friend? •

We are now come to the third *Observation* :

It

It is the especial duty of poor sinners to observe those times in which Christ will be found: seek him while he may be found, &c.

There is but in time, (we say) and out of time. Mariners will observe their winds, and be sure not to neglect them, be it night or day if they be present. Merchants will observe their Marts, and not neglect them, that they may buy the Commodities at the best hand. Nay, we read of other Creatures observing their times; to stir up poor, careless, stupid man. The Ant observes her time, and in Summer layes up for Winter; and the Prophet says,

Jer. 8. 7. *The Swallow and the Stork know their appointed times, and observe the time of their coming.* O how doth God complain of man, that his misery is great upon him, because he knows, not his

Ecc. 8. 6. *time? By observing of them, we are to understand laying hold of them, taking these times by the fore-lock, and improving them to the utmost advantage for the spiritual good of your immortal Souls. We read therefore that excellent Counsel of the Apostles Re-*
deeming

deeming the time : An allusion to Merchants, that observe their Mart-times, who will be sure not to neglect them. Every poor believer, and every poor sinner ought to be observers of the times in this sence. They should observe when the Lord strives and breaths with their poor Souls in his Ordinances. They should observe how the Lord allures and draws their hearts after himself. Therefore it is we have such especial times pointed at by the finger of God, that poor sinners might not miss of them. God points at them in the word that they may be observed. Now acquaint thy self with God. There is but a *Now* for it, a present time for it : this lost, and thy Soul is lost for ever. You must not think to put it off and say *to morrow* : No, the Lord sayes *Now* ; and should not you say, *Lord, why not Now* ? O do not say, come again *at a more convenient time*. *Christs* time is the most convenient time, and this is *Christs* time. *Now is the accepted time, &c.* See how the finger of Free Grace points out the time. O poor Soul, now thou

Job 21.

22.

2 Cor. 6.
2.

thou mayst be accepted of God, and laid in his bosome : Now his heart is open, now his arms are widened, expecting thy running in thither ; and if thou miss of this accepted time, thou wilt for ever be rejected of God. *Now or never* is the language of *Christ* in an

Heb. 3. 7. Ordinance. *Hearken to his voice while it is to day.* See still how God points at the present time. *While it is to day.*

It may be you may be dead to morrow ; why may not I say, damned to morrow ? Who knows what to morrow may bring forth ? We read of opening to *Christ* immediately. O poor sinners, you should not delay the business, but strike in with *Christ* while he is beseeching of you.

Luk. 12. 36.

1. *Reason.* Poor Sinners should be observers of *Christ's* times. This the Lord calls to ; and if we do not this, we turn a deaf ear to this blessed charmer. O what a pity it is, that a poor Soul should be deaf to *Christ* ? As though *Christ* only preached hell and damnation, and his Fathers displeasure. And alas, poor sinners, it is the quite contrary ; he preaches Heaven to you,
Salvation

Salvation to you. *This day*, saith he, poor Sinner, *salvation is come unto thy house*. If you will not come to him, he will come to you with his Salvation. This makes me remember that sweet call of *Christs* in the Prophet, *Hearken unto me ye stout-hearted that are far from Righteousness*. O poor Gentile Sinners, that are afar off from me, nay, that do oppose me : yet sayes he, *I bring near my Righteousness*. One would have thought it would have been, You stout-hearted I bring near my wrath, I bring near my judgements : O no but Gods thoughts are not as our thoughts. He calls such to accept of his Righteousness, and his Salvation, and shall we be deaf to such calls ? What a call is that, Hearken to his voice *while it is to day* ? *Christ* calls to poor Sinners, that they would lay hold of their especial times.

Isa. 46. ult?

2. This is complained on by God. The Calls of God, and the complaints of God do both speak it. And O this hath been complained on of old. O what a complaint was that of *Christ* against *Jerusalem*, O that thou hadst known

Mat. 23.
37.

known in this thy day, &c! And this complaint came from *Christ* weeping. He came nigh the City; and wept over it. Surely it is some notable Sermon *Christ* preaches, now he weeps: O this was it, that *Jerusalem* did not know her day. And at another time, *How often would I have gathered thee as a Hen gathers her Chickens under her wings, but she would not be gathered.* I would have gathered them into me, gathered them out of their sins, gathered them out of the world; my armes were stretched out to that very end, but they observed not their gathering times. Alas, what are the seasons of Grace but *Christs* gathering times? He sees, poor Souls are like a Lamb in a large place, and they will wander and wander untill they drop into the Pit, whence there is no Redemption, if *Christs* compassions do not gather them.

3. We are to observe our especial times in which *Christ* will be found, else we receive the Grace of God in vain. *Paul* writing upon this subject,
 2 Cor. 6. 1, *We beseech you* (sayes he) *as workers*
 2. *with*

with him that you receive not the Grace of God in vain; and then follows, *I have heard thee in an accepted time, &c.* He had been in the preceding Chapter speaking of the Ministry of Reconciliation, now sayes, *We beseech you that you receive not this Grace, (viz. of the Ministry of Reconciliation) in vain;* which you will do, if you observe not that *now is the accepted time, that now is the day of salvation.* The end of *Christ* is frustrated if you observe not these times in which he is willing to be found, for he offers himself in order to acceptation. O how sad would this be for so many Sermons of *Christ*, of his Love, of the Riches of Grace, to be in vain! For *Christ* to say, I have laboured in vain, *I have spent my strength for nought*, and in vain. It is spoken in the person of *Christ*. Is it not a pity free Grace should spend its breath in vain? O what will sinners have to say or answer the Lord, when the Lord Jesus shall say to them, O how many Sermons of my own Love, of my Fathers Love, did I preach to you, but who hath believed my report?

Isa. 49. 4.

port? All these were in vain. I could not be credited by you, though I came from the bosome of the Father to preach all these things unto you.

4. Sinners are to observe those especial times in which *Christ* is to be found, because upon these especial times depends Eternity. The eternal condition of a poor Soul depends upon one of these *Nows*. That very motion of the Spirit of God, which it may be thou slightest, or that very Sermon it may be thou refusest to hear, or upon the very conviction thou smotherest with thy worldly enjoyments or employments, it may be upon these very times did depend your eternal conditions. That Sermon thou was not at, might have been the means of thy Conversion. As I close with these Calls of *Christ*, fall in with these motions of the Spirit of *Christ*, so it will be with my Soul to all Eternity. O did but sinners think of this one thing, this one Truth, how serious would it make them in their observation of such times? Now this is for eternity, this motion, this striving of the Spirit
of

of God with my poor Soul. If any of you were going to Sea on a voyage, and all that you were worth depended upon that voyage, and if you miscarried you were undone, wives and children undone, O how careful would you be to observe your time, your winds, your markets? This is the case; thou art engaged in a voyage that all thou art worth is concerned in, nay infinitely more than thou art worth, even thy precious Soul; and if thou miscarry in this voyage thou art undone, even undone to all Eternity. O then what a mad man art thou that observest not what may tend to the security of thy great venture (*viz.*) thy precious Soul? Observe then thy gales for this voyage; it is either a making or a marring voyage.

5. Sinners are to observe *Christ's* times, when he is willing to be found, because these times lost will aggravate the condemnation of poor Souls. *Christ* hath not tendred himself so to all as he hath done to you. O how many Souls have lived and died without the tenders of *Christ*? How many that ne-

ver heard of a *Christ*? as they said,
We have not so much as heard of an
Holy Ghost. How many that sit in dark-
 ness, and the shadow of death? How
 many parts of the world that are the
dark places of the earth, full of the habita-
tions of Cruelty? You do not hear such
 Sermons in *India* as you do in *Eng-*
land; you do not hear *Christ* so preach-
 ed and tendred at *Guiny*, at *Jamaica*.
 Suppose those poor *Indians* and Na-
 tives that you converse with there,
 should know what you have heard of
Christ here, and what you have pro-
 fessed of *Christ* here, they would cer-
 tainly, seeing no more of Christianity,
 no more of likeness to *Christ* among
 you, certainly they would say, this
Christ is an Impostor, and this Chri-
 stianity a cheat, a delusion to gull the
 world withal. Therefore upon this
 account it is that a woe was denoun-
 ced against *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*;
If I had never spoken unto you, sayes
Christ, you had not had sin. O Sirs, if
Christ had never been preached to
 you, never been tendred to you, ne-
 ver beseeched you, never wooed you,
 you

you had been under less guilt : but now your sin remains ; and how can you escape , who have neglected so great salvation ? You may think to escape, you may think you have some back door to creep out at ; but alas, how can you escape (as *Christ* said to the Pharisees) the damnation of Hell ?

6. These times of *Christs* being willing to be found will not last alwayes. O what stronger reason to observe them ! *My Spirit shall not alwayes strive with man.* You think, poor Sinners, that I will alwayes wait on you, alwayes wooe you, alwayes beseech you : O no poor Sinners, times are coming on that my Bowels will be shut up in displeasure against you, my Bridge of Mercy shall be drawn, and my Gate of Mercy shall be shut, and then what will you do ? O poor Sinners, what standing will there be without in that day ? what crying, *Lord, Lord open unto us ?* Do you think to have a trade-wind to heaven ? do you think the wind will alwayes blow fair in your voyage for Eternity ? The time is coming that the Lord Jesus (as

Rev. 7.1.

it is said of those Angels) will keep the winds in his hands, and not suffer them to blow on a poor Soul. That was good Counsel of our dear Lord, *work while it is day, the night comes wherein no man can work.* Your day will not alwayes continue, the night comes. May it not be said by many poor Sinners, *Woe unto us, our day goeth away?* And alas poor Sinners, the night is no time for working in.

Ecc. 9.10

7. Reason. There are no *Christ*-finding times beyond this life. No *Christ*-finding times in the Grave, whither we are all going. That is excellent counsel, *what thou findest to do, do it with all thy might.* Now is the doing time, this present time is only the doing time : and the reason is very cogent, *for there is no work in the Grave whither we go* : then it is past time to work for Heaven, to work for an interest in *Christ*. O that word is a sad word, *it is past time.* As the Tree falls so it lies to all Eternity ; there is no turning of it on the other side. O then poor Souls had need look to it, and make sure when they fall, they fall right,

right, that they fall Heaven-ward. When you die, then all the tenders of *Christ* cease.

8. *Reason.* Because it is not long that *Christ* will call, that *Christ* will offer himself to be found of you. The Mart-dayes for your poor Souls will not long continue; the shadows of the evening are stretched upon us, the Sun of the Gospel declines apace. Time is short; Gospel-time is short, life-time is short, liberty is short; God is cutting us short. O now how should we observe the finding times of *Christ*! It is said, *the Lord began to cut Israel* 2 Kings 19. 32. short: but now the Lord hath been cutting *England* short a great while; cutting us short of Trading, of Liberties, of Priviledges; and all that we may observe the times of *Christ*, in which he is willing to be found. The Angel within a little time will swear, *Time shall be no more.*

Application.

Is it so, that Sinners should observe these times of *Christ*? 1. It doth inform

form us of the great stupidity and senselessness that is upon the Souls of poor Sinners naturally. They go on in the neglects of *Christ* untill the Lord Jesus meet them, and stop them. They do not consider. Nay, it was the complaint of the Lord against his own people, that they were worse than brutes, *The Oxe knows his owner, and the Ass his masters crib; and yet my people do not know, they do not consider.* O the brutishness of our hearts! The *Turtle* and the *Crane* observe the time of their coming, &c. The Psalmist cautions us, *be not as the Horse and as the Mule, that want understanding.* O may not every poor Sinner, when God comes to convince at first the Soul, say, *Surely I am more brutish than any man?*

2. It informs us that it is not the having times of *Christs* offering himself, but it is the observing of these times, that we are especially to look after. It is indeed a great Mercy to have them, but it is a greater to observe them. We may say in this case as in that, *who is wise, will observe these things, and the prudent shall know them.*

There

There are many poor Souls who are now in Hell, that have lived under the Calls of *Christ*, under the offers of *Christ*. What say you to *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*? You may hear *Christ* forty years together preached; nay, you may profess *Christ*; nay, you may follow *Christ* for loaves many years, and after all this be Cast-awayes; nay, a man may preach *Christ*, and at last be a Cast-away.

3. It informs us, that the Spirit of God doth not alwayes breath alike, and strive alike. The Spirit of the Lord came upon *Sampson* by times: and the Angel came down at a certain season. The wind of the Spirit blows by gusts many times upon poor Souls, *it blows where it listeth*, and it blows when it listeth: It may be, not in that Ordinance thou expectedst most, but in that Ordinance thou expectedst least. *Or ever I was aware my Soul made me* (sayes a poor Creature) *like the chariot of Aminadab*. There is a set time to favour *Zion*: So there is a set time for the Spirit of God, both to convince and comfort the poor Soul.

4. It informs us, that in every poor Sinners miscarriage to all Eternity, there is room to justifie God. We must not think to lay it at Gods door, as too many would do ; but we must lay
 Hof. 13. 9. it at our own doors. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self. Perditio tua ex te* will be the *Motto* written upon Sinners backs in Hell. Will not God say
 Jer. 4. 18. to them, *These things have your own wayes and doings procured unto you ?* O then will not every poor guilty Soul, cry out, O ! O my self was the cause of all these ! O how often did *Christ* wooe me, invite me, call on me, beseech me to be reconciled to him ? but wretch that I was, hard hearted wretch that I was, I had no room for him, my heart was shut against him, I shut him out of my heart, and now for ever I must justifie him for shutting me out of his Heaven.

5. It informs us what a great evil it is to put off *Christ* when he is willing to be found. O how many say of *Christ*, and to *Christ*, as he did to *Paul*, Come at a more convenient time and I will hear thee. They are too busie with

with the world, they have no leifure, no time, and they desire to be excufed. O what if the Lord fay to fuch, as he did to them, *They fhall not tafte of his Supper* ? O Sinners, do you think *Chrift* will be thus dallied with, to fay to morrow, to morrow, and *Chriffs* voice is to day, to day ? Do you think *Chrift* can be mocked or deceived ? It is true, the Gospel is called the word of his Patience ; but do you think it is impoffible to weary his Patience ? Do not we read the Prophet complaining of the Jews, *Tou have wearied man, and will you weary God alfo* ? O Ifa. 7. 13. Sinner, doft thou know what thou doeft to delay thy ftriking in with *Chrift* ? What if God take thee at thy word when thou fayeft, *Depart from me, for as yet I defire not the knowledge of thy wayes* ? What if God fhould re- folve, as *Mofes* faid to *Pharaoh*, *I will never fee thy face more* ? Where wert thou then ? and what a fad condition would thy poor Soul be in then ?

2. Ufe. Is it fo that poor Souls fhould obferve *Chriffs* times in which he is willing to be found ? then it is a word
of

of Reproof to such as put off *Christ*, that observe not these times. May not the case be expostulated with such poor Souls, as God did with the people of *Israel* by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, *why will you dye O house of Israel?* O poor Sinners, why do you neglect such great salvation? why do you dally and delay in a business of infinite moment and eternal consequence? Is the salvation of an immortal Soul a jesting matter? are Heaven and *Christ* indifferences? O why then poor Souls should ye not arise from your sloth, and shake your selves, and resolve to have a *Christ* how dearly soever you come by him? May not *Christ* say to poor Sinners that loyter in their motion Heaven-ward, as was said to them, *why stand you idle all the day long?*

I. Are not such poor Souls to be re-proved? This is the highest ingratitude and unthankfulness in the world; that *Christ* should make offers, and be willing to be found, and you put a slight upon him, and you not observe them. Is this your kindness to your friend? *Will you thus requite the Lord*
O fool-

O foolish people and unwise ?

2. Are not such Souls to be reprov-
ed ? This speaks great infidelity and
unbelief. Is not this the reason why
Christ and poor sinners make not a
closure, they do not believe he is wil-
ling to receive them, to embrace them,
to pardon them. This cross-iron bolt
and bar of unbelief lies betwixt *Christ*
and a poor Soul, and was it not this
that grieved *Christ* ? *He was grieved
because of their unbelief, and hardness of
their heart.* Their Souls were doubly
bolted against the Lord Jesus. O poor
sinners, after all *Christ* hath promised,
all he hath suffered, all he hath done,
that you should slight *Christ*, when he
is willing to be found of you, is not
this sad ?

3. Are not such to be reprov-
ed ? You will observe times for your world-
ly secular advantages ; you will ob-
serve a Summer season to go into the
Countrey for the air, if your bodies
need it ; you will observe times to
take physick in ; you will observe your
winds to sail in ; you will observe your
marts and fairs ; you will observe your
Change-

Change-time, and all this for your outward advantage: and alas, you neglect your especial times and seasons for your Souls. All these things are but your outward concernments, but there are things that concern the peace of your immortal Souls, and how do you look after them?

3. *Use.* Is it so that the Lords finding times ought to be observed by poor Sinners? Then it is a word of exhortation to poor Sinners, that they would take especial notice of such times; that it may not be said of you, as is said in that case *Job* speaks, *The Lord passed by on my left hand, and on my right hand, and I perceived him not.* For God to be near a poor Soul in an Ordinance, in a motion of the Spirit, and the Soul see him not, for the eyes of the Soul to be held that it knows him not, O how sad is this! O delay not to lay hold of *Christ* at such times.

1. Your delayes will provoke and displease *Christ*. *Christ* loves that Souls should close with him without delays. We read of some that delayed the matter, and fell to framing excuses,
and

and the Lord was angry with them, and said, *They should not taste of his Supper.* The Spouses delay to open to *Christ* so displeased him, that he did withdraw from her, and she paid dearly for her delay. Now did he stand waiting, untill his locks were filled with the drops of the night?

2. Your delays are dishonourable to *Christ*. They dishonour him, as though he were not to be trusted, when he calls for Souls to close with him, to open to him immediately, as though there were no great danger, as though it were but a dallying, jesting matter, and you could do it when you would, even at your leisure.

3. Your delays will prove dangerous to your own Souls. We say there is danger in delay; and O how true is that in Soul cases! What if God shut up his bowels in displeasure? What if he will be gracious no more in visiting you, in breathing upon you, in knocking at your doors? What if the Lord do withdraw from you, and say he will wait no more upon you, strive no more with you,
but

but pass that Sentence upon you, *Let them alone, let them wander like a Lamb in a large place.* O poor Sinners, you are in danger of all this, and much more by your delays to observe *Christs* times of being willing to be found.

4. Your delays will make your falling in with *Christs* finding times, a great deal more difficult. Yea every day it will be more difficult than other. Sin and corruption will grow stronger, Satans temptations will be more violent. The longer a Soul is held in a snare, the faster it is.

1. It will be more difficult, you will have fewer motions of the Spirit to call you out, and thrust you out to close with *Christ*. Delay to answer the Spirits breathings, doth put him upon withdrawing. When poor Sinners have so often quenched the Spirit, the Spirit lets them alone, and strikes sparks of holy motions and resolutions there no more.

2. It will be more difficult, your selves will have less heart to it. The longer a poor Soul lies snoring in the bed

bed of sin, the less mind he hath to get up. And indeed such souls seldom get up, untill the cry of fire, fire (I mean hell fire) get into their Consciences. The longer a man sits upon a seat, the stiffer he is, and the unfitter he is to stir and rise; so it will be in this case.

3. It will be the more difficult, because guilt is every day more contracted. The more guilt, the less mind to close with those times in which *Christ* is willing to be found. It is with a Soul in this case, as it was with our first Parents; they were afraid, when they saw they were naked, and they hid themselves. Guilt is for running away from God.

4. It will be more difficult, Satan will be stronger with his opposition. His temptations and objections will get faster hold of you. If you had sought *Christ* sooner, if you had early in the morning looked after him, haply he might have been found of you: but now says Satan, it is too late; your day of Grace is past; now his bowels are shut up in displeasure against

gainst you. Such objections will make dreadful work with poor guilty Souls. O it must needs be sad when Satans objections get into our Consciences.

5. It will be the more difficult, because the sense of former delayes will fill the heart for the present with jealousies, and misgivings of God and *Christ*. Alas, I have stayed too long, I doubt it is now past time; will he be found of me, at this time of the day? will he receive me that come so late? will he not tell me there is no room for one that hath dallied and delayed so long? O such jealousies will exceedingly hinder the Souls falling in with *Christ*.

5. Your delayes, to observe *Christ's* times in which he is willing to be found, may in time bring a hardness of heart upon you; and O how sad would this be? Take heed your hearts be not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. You think you can close with *Christ* another time as well as this, in another Ordinance as well as this, in another duty as well

as

as this ; and alas, in a little time you come to be hardned by your delayes.

We are come now to the fourth and last *Observation* in the Text.

There is a day and time in which Christ will not be found, as well as a day and time in which Christ will be found.

Though *Christ* offer himself to poor Sinners now, yet he will not alwayes do so ; his Golden Scepter of Free Grace will not alwayes be held out : As there is a time to hold it out, so there is a time to take it in. Though he call long, wait long, knock long, yet he will not alwayes stand at your doors. Therefore we read of opening to him immediately. He will mark the door and be gone. We read of a very sad judgement upon *Israel* : They should come and seek the Lord with their Herds, but shall not find him, for he hath withdrawn himself from them. O what a sad case was that of the Spouse to seek her beloved, and could not find him ! but yet at last she recovered a sight of him : but it is far sadder to seek him and never

Luk. 12. 35

or he hath made himself free from them. Dutch.

P

find

find him, but for a poor Soul to be sealed up ~~up~~ lost Soul to all eternity. We read of *Eſau* seeking the birth-right, yea with tears, but yet could not find it. *Chriſt* lamented over *Jeruſalem* under this conſideration, *but now they are hid from thine eyes* ; now it is paſt time.

Heb. 12.
17.
Gen. 27.
36.

But the great inquiry will be this ; What are theſe times in which *Chriſt* will not be found ? For as we have upon this Text ſhew'd the times in which *Chriſt* will be found, ſo we muſt ſhew the contrary, the times in which *Chriſt* will not be found.

1. When Souls are ſhut-up, and ſealed up under obduracy and judicial hardneſs of heart. Give me leave to diſtinguiſh betwixt a natural obduracy of heart, and a judicial obduracy of heart ; betwixt being under hardneſs of heart, and being ſhut up under it. This ſhutting up, and giving up is an Act on Gods part ; ſo he gave up to their own luſts ; *I gave them over to the arbitration of their own hearts* : Some read it, *The Lord paſt an Act of Tradition upon them.* And now their time and

Pſal. 81.
12.
Rom. 1.23

and day of *Grace* is over; now the Soul is delivered up to the Gaoler, and is shut up close prisoner, sentence is past upon him, and cannot be recalled. But poor souls know this, you first reject God, and refuse the sweet offers and tenders of the *Lord Jesus Christ*; you put God upon this by your sinning against him: So the people of *Israel* did, for God waits long, and woos long, and exercises great patience before he thus give up poor sinners.

2. Time in which *Christ* will not be found, is, when poor Souls seek him, but they seek him feignedly; as it is said of the children of *Israel*, *they turned to him feignedly.* Poor Souls should seek the Lord with their whole heart; and to such seeking there is a promise; *And you shall seek me and find me, when you search for me with all your hearts:* therefore it is, the Lord hath called for the heart in our seeking of him; *My Son give me thy heart*; not thy tongue, nor thy head, nor thy hand; but thy heart. The kidneys were offer'd in sacrifice to the Lord, to teach us he regards the inwards, the integrity of our hearts in

Jer. 3. 10.

Jer. 29. 11.

our sacrifices. *Christ* loves to be sought to in good earnest with all your hearts. The divided heart was found faulty.

3. When poor Souls seek him slothfully. We are to seek him diligently. We read, to teach us this lesson, that the Ass, the firstling of an Ass was not offered to God in sacrifice, and Snails, those slow-paced creatures were unclean creatures. We should not be slothful in seeking *Christ*. Will he be found of the sluggard? When the Spouse sought *Christ* in Bed, he would not be found of her. The Spouse at another time indulged her self in her sloth, and then *Christ* would not be found.

4. Another time in which *Christ* will not be found, is, when you have griev'd and quenched the motions of his spirit: now he will withdraw from you and will not be found; then he sayes, his *spirit shall not alwayes strive with man.*

When do poor Sinners grieve the Spirit that *Christ* will not be found?

1. When they refuse him, though he hath stood long knocking at their doors and waited upon them. Thus we see he did by the Spouse, he waited long,

long, untill his locks were filled with the dew of the night, and yet she opened not to *Christ*; and you see how ill *Christ* took this, and did withdraw upon it. O poor Soul, how long hast thou made *Jesus Christ* stand and wait? But know he will not always thus wait.

2. When we believe not his willingness to receive us, then we grieve him and cause him to withdraw. *He was grieved because of their unbelief, and the hardness of their hearts, saith the Text.*

It was said of *Israel* by the Lord, *how long will this people provoke me? and* Num. 14. 17.

how long will it be ere they believe me, for all my signs and wonders? Unbelief puts God to his *How-longs*: Therefore the Prophet complains, personating *Christ, who hath believed our report, &c.*

Must it not needs grieve him when you do not believe him? 1. He promises to you mercy and pardon, poor sinners, upon your coming over to close with him; and would it not grieve any, to have the most serious and solemn promises slighted? To be look'd upon as a person unfaithful, this takes Gods good name from him; his name is *faith-*

fulness?

fulness: Is not he faithful who hath promised? 2. He is sent from his Father to declare, this is the heart of the Father also; and this must needs grieve him that you should not credit his Father; that he should come from Heaven to Earth with such an errand, and cannot be trusted. If you ask, but how comes he to be so well acquainted with his Fathers heart? He tells us, he lay in his Fathers bosome, therefore he can tell best how it beats toward poor sinners. 3. He hath sealed with an oath; *As I live sayes the Lord, I delight not in the death of a sinner.* O surely the Lord would gladly have poor sinners to believe his love. As one sayes, O happy man, for whose sake the Lord swears; O unhappy man that will not trust a swearing God! The oath of God is for confirmation of Gods good will to poor Souls. O how must it then grieve him that he cannot have his oath believed? 4. O how it grieves him now he hath sealed this love with his blood! Herein Divine Love is commended to poor sinners, that while Enemies *Christ* died for them. 5. It must needs grieve

† Joh. 18.

grieve him, not to believe him after so long waiting upon them. Now when we have thus griev'd him, he will withdraw, & not be found of poor sinners.

5. Time in which *Christ* will not be found of poor Souls, is, when in a time of mercy & prosperity we have slighted him, and yet in a time of judgment and calamity seek him, but only seek him by being affrighted at his judgments. *Israel* forgot God in their Prosperity, and how did God take it? and he said, *I will hide my face from them*, I ^{Psal. 32.} will see what their end will be. God ^{20.} now in a time of judgment will not be found of them, because in a time of prosperity they had slighted him. Therefore we read the Prophet *Jeremy* threatning *Israel*, that the Lord will *give them his back and not his face in* Jer. 8. 17. *the day of their calamity*. Now O what a dreadful thing is this in a time of calamity and common judgment, to have no God to look upon a people! To go to him at such times is not to make him our choice, but only to make him our refuge: and if we make him not our choice in a time of prosperity, can we

expect he should be our refuge in a time of calamity? What a sad word was that, *Go to the Gods whom you have served, and see if they can deliver you.*

Application.

Are there times in which *Christ* will not be found? 1. It informs of the folly of *poor souls* that trifle in seeking *Christ*. O why should we dally in a matter of such moment, a matter of eternal consequence? Be not deceived poor sinners, *Christ* will not alwayes wait upon you, not always be willing to be found of you. The time is coming that his bowels will be shut up in displeasure, that he will be gracious no more, that his mercies will be clean gone for evermore. O then why do you trifle now? will the gates of mercy alwayes stand open? will *Christ's* arms always be held wide open? 1. Here is great folly in trifling in seeking *Christ*, it is a matter of eternal consequence. There is no trifling in great cases. We say we must be serious, it is a matter of great concernment. O! Soul-concernments are great concernments. If I miscarry (says a man) in this design, I am undone. O
then

then he will be mighty watchful and careful: So sayes a poor Soul, if I mis-carry in this great business, if I miss of *Christ*, I am undone, yea to all eternity undone. 2. O the great folly of trifling in seeking *Christ*! This is all the time you have to seek him in. When a man hath a work allotted to him, and he must do it in such a time, else it can never be done, O what folly it is to trifle that time away allotted for that work! and this is the case; this present life-time is your allotted time to seek *Christ*, to get acquaintance with *Christ*; and after the hour-glass of this present time be out, you will never have more time for this work. *There is no work in the grave whither you go.* I often tell you the grave is too dark a shop to do any Soul-work in. 3. O the folly of trifling in seeking of *Christ*! ere long it will be past time. Is not this great folly, to trifle when time goes so fast away? If you were like to have a long day, you might say something, sinners, for your trifling: but to have a short day, and a great deal of work, and to trifle any of it away, this must needs be great folly. We read of time being short. 2. It

2. It informs us of this, that though God wait long, yet he will not wait always; *my spirit shall not always strive with man.* You may weary God as the Prophet says, *You have wearied man, and will you weary God also?* He will be gone from your doors, after long standing and long knocking.

3. It informs of the wisdom of such poor Souls as seek him in a day and time when he will be found; wisdom observes to take its fittest times and seasons. There is much in timing actions. O now this Soul and heavenly wisdom is all for observing its seasons. Here the foolish Virgins mis'd it sadly; they did not observe their seasons for getting oyl into their lamps. 1. Is not this wisdom to seek the Lord while he may be found? this will lay you in against the most tremendous and terrible dispensations that can come upon earth. Wisdom appears much in foresight, and in laying something in for a rainy day. O poor souls, you know not what rainy days hang over your heads; what terrible clouds cover the face of the heavens, and what shakings of earth and
heaven

heaven may come. Therefore it is wisdom to seek *Christ* before such dayes come, that the Lord may not be a terrour to us in an evil day. Therefore it is that *Iesus Christ* is prophesied of to be a covert from rain and from storm, and a refuge. He is the only City of refuge to fly to, when pursuers are abroad. 2. Is it not wisdom to seek *Christ* while he may be found? this will fit you for death. Is it not great wisdom to consider our latter end? This is that which God wished his own people might do. Was not it wisdom in the five wise Virgins, that they prepared for the Bridegrooms approaching? O how much wisdom appears in this! It is the property of a fool to say, *non putâram*, I had not thought. O how many then have died fools, saying, I never thought an interest in *Christ* was so difficult a thing to obtain; I never thought of any times in which *Christ* would not be found. 3. Is it not great wisdom to seek *Christ* while he may be found? your eternal happiness depends upon it. Is it not wisdom to provide for eternity? every man thinks it wisdom

dom to provide for his own family ; what then is it to provide for his own Soul? 4. Is it not wisdom to do that now, which else your Souls will repent to all eternity? Wisdom consists in preventing after-repentings. O how many Souls are repenting the loss of their time in hell ! and saying, O if they were to live on earth again, and had their opportunities to seek *Christ* again, they would never be such loyterers and sluggards in the matters of their Souls. 5. Is it not wisdom to do that which you came into the world to do ? Was not this to seek the Lord while he may be found, to look about for your salvation? Did you come into the world to eat and drink and rise up to play? What, needed you immortal souls for such sensual employments? 6. Is it not wisdom to do that God gives you time on purpose it might be done? Why doth God exercise so much patience ? Why doth he hover over Souls, and continues thus to be gracious, but that he would still have them seek the Lord Jesus. 7. Is it not *wisdom* to do that now, which we have only means now to do

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it in? No means of seeking *Christ* after this life ; no means then of acquaintance with God. Now our dayes are filled up with means and Gospel-advantages to this end.

2. *Use*. Is it so, that there are times in which *Christ Jesus* will not be found? then it is a word of Exhortation, to improve your present time in seeking *Christ* ; *Redeem the time*. The Apostle gives us the exhortation, to *walk as wise and not as fools, redeeming the time because the dayes are evil*. 1. Time is precious. It is a precious commodity in hell, sayes one, where a damned Soul would give all the world for one inch of time. It is precious time, for it is filled up with precious advantages for precious souls. It is precious, it is your working-day for eternity. O then while he is to be found seek him. 2. You must be judged according to the precious opportunities you have now for your Souls. *The word, sayes Christ, that I speak, shall judge you at the last day*. 3. Seek him in your present day, it will lie heavy upon you that you lost so much time in which you might have sought

fought *Christ*. O how doth it cut to the heart to consider, what a day a *poor sinner* once had, only he wanted a heart to look after *Christ*. O what wringing of hands will there be in hell one day under this very consideration ! 4. Seek him in your present day, if others had enjoyed such Golden Scepter-seasons, they would have kissed the Scepter, and have submitted to the terms of the Lord Jesus, they would have believed, they would have repented, yea, in sack-cloth and ashes, as is said of *Tyre* and *Sidon*. 5. Seek him in your present day, the damned Souls that have lost him for ever, if God should privilege them to have another day of Grace to seek *Christ* in, O how would they seek him ! how would they mourn for him ! Would they hear as you do ? pray as you do ? sweal away their time upon which eternity doth depend as you do ? Would they mis-improve precious seasons for their souls as you do ? If you did but know what the loss of an immortal Soul meant, is it possible you could sleep away, play away *Sermons* of *Christ*, *Heaven* and *Salvation* ? 6. Seek him in your present day, your Enemies seek you because you seek him. To be sought after by Enemies and found by them, as you must reckon of one time or other ; and yet not to find *Christ*, O how sad is this ! Methinks our enemies should stir us up to lay hold of all seasons to seek *Christ*. Could you young ones, or old ones, go to prison and have not yet found him whom
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your Souls love ? Can you suffer, and not have found *Christ* ?

3. *Use.* Is it so, that there are times in which *Christ* will not be found ? It is then a word of terrour to all such as live in their neglects to seek the *Lord Jesus Christ*. What, poor Souls, if his bowels shall cease yearning towards your Souls ? What if they should be shut up in displeasure ? If the *Lord Jesus Christ* should strive with you no more, O what a dangerous condition were your Souls in then !

1. Your danger that live in neglects of *Christ* is much in this, your offers and tenders of *Christ* will never be forgotten by you in another world. O they will stick by your Consciences in hell ! Nothing will aggravate poor sinners condemnation so, as this, they slighted the offers of life and salvation by *Christ*. *How can you escape, if you neglect such great salvation ? It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, than for Chorazin and Bethsaida.* Why so ? the one had *Christ* preached and offered to them, and so had not the other.

2. There is no possibility for your escape that neglect to seek *Christ* ; whoever escape you cannot. *How can you escape, &c.* O poor Souls, can you contend with the wrath of an Omnipotent God ? *Can your hearts endure, or your hands be made strong in that day he shall deal with you ?* If you cannot escape it, nor contend with it, O how miserable are you ! This is a great piece of hell that you are in already.

3. You

3. You that neglect *Christ* now, must never come under a possibility of a tender of Grace after death. If there could but be hope in hell of a possibility of a tender of Grace, this poor hope would relieve the Souls that are in that pit of misery. A very *peradventure*, or it may be would be some comfort to them, if they might ever come under the tenders of *Christ* again. No, their condition is now unalterably stated for ever.

4. You that neglect *Christ* now, know, this is a degree of despight to the Spirit of Grace. Heb. 10. 29. And is not this a dangerous thing? That Text in the *Hebrews* will tell you so. Is not this to use *Christ* despightfully? and O how can *Christ* bear these sleights time after time?

5. You that neglect *Christ* now, are every moment under condemnation. There is now no condemnation to them that are in *Christ Jesus*. Then others are under condemnation. O now what if death should smite thee in this condition? Would not thy poor Soul, sinner, be struck dead and damned at a blow? O then see thy danger and tremble to continue in it. Continue no longer in thy neglects of *Christ*, but seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.

F I N I S.

